The Dissertation Committee for Saba Khan Vlach Certifies that this is the approved version of the following Dissertation:

LITERACY TEACHERS' ENACTMENT OF CRITICAL PEDAGOGIES WITH MULTICULTURAL CHILDREN'S LITERATURE DURING INTERACTIVE READ ALOUD

Committee:

Anna E. Maloch, Supervisor

Keffrelyn D. Brown, Co-Supervisor

Allison Skerrett

Randy Bomer

Germine H. Awad

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by

Saba Khan Vlach

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Dedication

Okay ladies, now let's get in formation, 'cause I slay. ~ formation, beyoncé

To Ms. Smith, Ms. Martinez, and Ms. Barker and the many teachers who work tirelessly to make this world equitable for all young people**.** You slay.

Our children will always hear

Romantic tales of distant years

Our gilded age may come and go

Our crooked dreams will always glow…

Remember, remember

All we fight for

Remember, remember

All we fight for ~ heaven, the walkmen

To Zayd, Milat, Amaya, Cyra, Firyal, and Azu.

All I fight for is for you.

To Fiza.

I will always remember.

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When it look like the sun wasn't gonna shine anymore, God put a rainbow in the clouds.

~ African American song, 19th century.

Dr. Maya Angelou said,

> Imagine? I have had so many rainbows in my clouds. I have had a lot of clouds, but I have had so many rainbows. And one of the things I do when I step up on the stage…when I go to teach my classes…I bring everyone who has ever been kind to me with me. Black, White, Asian, Spanish-speaking, Native American, gay, straight, everybody – I say, "Come with me. I'm going on the stage. Come with me. I need you now." Long dead, you see? So, I don't ever feel I have no help. I've had rainbows in my clouds.

I cannot fully comprehend that the time has come to write my acknowledgments – marking the close of a dream that I was never quite sure would be fulfilled. I must acknowledge first and foremost that I also have had so many rainbows in my clouds. And, I thank Allah for each of you that have stood with me through the many journeys of my lifetime.

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OK, on a final note, these were some hard years for me personally and for me with the world. I needed daily nudges – daily energy. I found what I needed in Beyoncé. Thank you, B, Everything is LOVE.

Thank you to <u>ALL</u> of you for stepping up on this stage and cAbstract

Literacy Teachers' Enactment of Critical Pedagogies with Multicultural Children's Literature During Interactive Read Aloud

Saba Khan Vlach, PhD

The University of Texas at Austin, 2019

Supervisors: Anna E. Maloch, Keffrelyn D. Brown

Abstract:

This qualitative, multi-case study examines the classroom interactions between three critical elementary teachers and their students during interactive read-aloud events with multicultural children's literature. For one school year, I observed and video- and audio- recorded these teachers' read-alouds and literature discussions in order to consider the following three research questions:

1. How do elementary literacy teachers sustain and grow their enactment of critical pedagogies?
2. During whole-group discussions of multicultural children's literature, how do teachers address critical sociocultural knowledge and issues of inequity?
3. How do teachers who practice critical pedagogy navigate the critical encounters that arise when they discuss multicultural children's literature?

Drawing on Freire's (1970/2000) theory of critical literacy, Kumashiro's (2001; 2009) theory of anti-oppressive education, and Brown's (2013) theory of humanizing critical sociocultural knowledge, my analysis centered on illuminating the ways that Ms. Smith, Ms. Barker, and Ms. Martinez enacted critical pedagogies within this structure of literacy instruction, as well as gaining insight into how these teachers sustained and grew

their work as critical educators. I took an ethnographic approach to data collection; and I used qualitative and discourse analytic methods to analyze within and across multiple data sources, including audio- and video-recordings, transcriptions, classroom artifacts (e.g., students' reader responses, photos of language charts), memos, and field notes. In response to my first research question, I report that these teachers sustained and grew their enactment of critical pedagogies by designing an all-encompassing curriculum of experiences for themselves (Brown, 2013) in both their professional and personal lives, engaging in [social justice] praxis, and pursuing opportunities to learn new critical sociocultural knowledge. In response to my second and third research questions, I report that teachers address critical sociocultural knowledge and navigate critical encounters with their students by: a) reimagining the possibilities of interactive read aloud in the elementary classroom; b) extending talk towards criticality; c) turning discourse back to the students. These three cases demonstrate that teachers can offer rich literacy instruction, as well as intentional, daily space to collaboratively build humanizing critical sociocultural knowledge towards transformation.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Theoretical Frameworks

"We can't talk about that in school."

After six weeks of reading and discussing literature written by African American authors about African American characters, my 2nd-graders and I were seated around our whole group rug, with all the books in the middle, and I asked them what they thought about this collection of literature. Among the African American kids in the class were Clarissa[1] and Jerome. During the talk, Clarissa pointed out that all of the characters in the books were Black. Immediately, Jerome stood up and said, "We can't talk about that in school." I asked him to tell us more about what we could not talk about, and he said, "We are not supposed to talk about being Black in school. That's racist."

I didn't know how to respond to Jerome. In his extraordinary speech, he had reiterated the rules of modern color-blind, neoliberal society. As a seven-year-old, Jerome had already absorbed the American public school narrative of meritocracy (Leonardo, 2009), which requires the performance of colorblindness even in the face of obvious racial inequity. He had given me an opportunity to address a fundamental problem in American culture, but I couldn't capitalize on it.

This exchange with Jerome exemplifies a "critical encounter" (DeNicolo & Franquiz, 2006), which is defined as a moment "…when a word, concept, or event in a story, surprises, shocks, or frightens the reader to a degree that they seek to inquire further about the vocabulary or event" (p. 157). For this research project, I observed how three elementary school teachers employ certain pedagogical strategies to navigate critical encounters like this one. Moreover, they plan for such encounters by preparing

[1] All names are pseudonyms.

units that examine critical issues such as class, gender, inequality, and race, and they choose texts for class discussion that support their critical pedagogical goals.

In recent years, it has become increasingly popular for literacy teachers who are also critical educators to use multicultural children's literature to support students in developing and maintaining both their cultural competence and their critical consciousness. These teachers are likely to experience countless challenging moments like the one I've described from my own classroom. During that moment, I did not know of any other teachers on my campus who were using culturally conscious literature (Sims, 1982) or enacting critical pedagogy, so when Jerome invoked the color-blind ideology of public school, I felt confused about what my next steps should be. I wanted to provide multiple perspectives for my students through multicultural children's literature, so that they would understand that their stories mattered and were integral to our society. However, I learned repeatedly that in practice, it is very difficult for a classroom teacher to disrupt the dominant narratives of our society.

Synthesizing the work of such scholars as Kumashiro (2001; 2009), Darder (2016), and Apple (1990/2004), I understand and define "dominant narratives" as stories that are told in service of the dominant social groups' interests and ideologies. These stories achieve dominance through repetition, the apparent authority of the speaker, and the silencing of alternative accounts. Dominant narratives are normalized through their repetition and authority, and thus, they have the illusion of being objective and apolitical, when in fact they are neither.

Based on this definition, I understand that dominant narratives work together to maintain and normalize the status quo of dominant social groups. Apple (1990/2004) defines dominant social groups as follows:

> Dominant groups are able to bring large groups of people under their leadership because they have already prepared the ideological ground for our understanding of these events and have helped create what Raymond Williams called "structures of feeling," which make it harder to withstand the neo-liberal and neo-conservative elements that have slowly but effectively become integral parts of our common sense. (p. 158)

In the United States, it is widely understood that the dominant groups are made up of White, middle-class, Christian, heterosexual people (e.g., Delpit, 1995/2006; Kumashiro, 2001; Sleeter, 1996), whose social and cultural values are typically regarded as representative of "normal" American culture. Thus, dominant narratives serve to maintain these groups' culture and power status as the norm; these narratives, including narratives about America as a post-racial society, public school as race-neutral, and concepts of meritocracy and the American dream, have been and continue to be repeated to such a vast degree that they permeate our society as common sense. These dominant narratives of America as a country built upon the principles of justice, democracy, and equal opportunity are reinforced by negative narratives about the "Other" (Kumashiro, 2001)—people who are not members of the dominant social groups. These narratives portray the "Other" as inferior, deficient, and unable to meet the common-sense standards of American society (De Lissovoy, 2015; Valencia & Solórzano, 1997/2012).

Nearly a decade after my challenging interaction with Jerome and Clarissa, I continue to use multicultural children's literature to address issues of systemic sociocultural inequity in my teaching, and I continue to find this practice challenging and unpredictable. I believe that many literacy teachers, who share my commitment to critical

education, would agree that this is hard work that always feels unfinished, especially in an era of standardization and post-racial ideology. Precisely because critical education is hard work that always feels unfinished (Freire, 1970/2000), we need more empirical work to further examine how this work can be done successfully. We also need research to explore how this work can be sustained over the long term. The purpose of this study was to examine both of these questions in order to advance research in the fields of literacy instruction, elementary education, and critical pedagogical approaches. This study examined how elementary literacy teachers sustain and grow their enactment of critical pedagogies, as well as how they enact critical pedagogies in the elementary literacy classroom using multicultural children's literature.

PROBLEM STATEMENT: DOMINANT NARRATIVES ABOUT THE "OTHER"

This study investigated how three critical educators challenged dominant narratives about the "Other" through literacy instruction. As described above, in the United States, White, Christian, middle-class culture is widely accepted as the dominant, normal culture. Members of society who do not fit within this demographic are positioned as the "Other." For Kumashiro (2001), "the 'Other' refer(s) to those groups that are traditionally marginalized in society, that is, that are 'Other' than the norm… groups targeted by racism, classism, sexism, and heterosexism" (p. 3). The cultural process of marginalizing the "Other" includes positioning non-normative individuals and communities as deficient. Menchaca (1997) traced deficit thinking regarding the "Other" back to the 1600s, explaining that these "discourses centered on the premise that people of color were either biologically or culturally inferior to Caucasians" (p. 13). These scholars show us that the cultural practice of oppressing the "Other" has a long history and continues today. Moreover, these deficit narratives surrounding the "Other" are

reiterated in school, providing justification for the inequitable treatment of students from diverse backgrounds. González (2005) described how these "Other" students are often positioned:

> Even today, although we would hope that these deficit conceptualizations would belong to the dustbin of history, we can still find evidence in some teacher training programs and in the popular mind that students' culture within their households is viewed as deficient in cognitive and social resources for learning. (p. 34)

These deficit narratives of the "Other" enable dominant groups to maintain their cultural norms as the status quo, thereby maintaining their general power in society.

The already troubling deficit narratives about the "Other," some may argue, have worsened in recent years, as openly racist commentators and organizations have become emboldened by the Trump administration. One present-day example of a high-status White Christian man demonizing the "Other" can be found in the discourse of Steve King, a U.S. Representative from Iowa. King believes Western civilization is in danger of being irrevocably tarnished by the "Other," and to that effect, he recently tweeted, "[Geert] Wilders understands that culture and demographics are our destiny. We can't restore our civilization with somebody else's babies" [@SteveKingIA, March 12, 2017]. On January 10, 2019, according to a report in *The New York Times,* King asked during an interview, "White nationalist, white supremacist, Western civilization – how did the language become offensive? Why did I sit in classes teaching me about the merits of our history and our civilization?" King's intolerance and fear of the "Other" falls in line with the current political climate under the Trump Administration, as well as the smokescreen he and others like him employ to mask their racism as genuine concern for the well-being of the nation (and of "Western Civilization" in general). These statements outraged many members of dominant groups because although these discourses about the "Other" have

existed for centuries, the oppression exercised by dominant groups is often handled covertly—and that includes spinning a dominant narrative about America as a post-racial society with a colorblind ideology. King himself invoked color-blind ideology as he defended his tweet, claiming, "There was nothing in my statement that referenced race." In this attempt to promote a reading of his tweet as xenophobic rather than racist, King allowed the dominant groups to believe he was talking about some other "Other" that was not American. Critical educators recognize xenophobia as a form of racism, and they seek to challenge all enactments of racism.

King crossed a line by making the overt statements that are usually hidden within the covert subtext of hegemonic discourse. Hegemony is the social, cultural, ideological, or economic influence exerted by dominant groups, and "institutions of cultural preservation and distribution like schools create and recreate forms of consciousness that enable social control to be maintained without the necessity of dominant groups having to resort to overt mechanisms of domination" (Apple, 1990/2004, p. 3). As Jerome told Clarissa, it is against the rules to mention race in school.

Jerome's defense of hegemonic norms, which work to justify the continued oppression of Black children like him, is an example of the way that social control can operate covertly in school.

According to today's dominant narratives, even though the system is colorblind and fair, the "Other" continues to fall short, and these shortcomings are presented to the nation in terms of deficiencies or "gaps." For example, right now there are widely accepted narratives regarding the "achievement gap" (e.g., Vanneman, Hamilton, Baldwin Anderson, & Rahman, 2009) and the "word gap" (e.g., Fuller, Fuller, Bein, Kim, & Rabe-Hesketh, 2015) between White and non-White ("Other") children. Rather than consider how entrenched discrimination as consequences of the hidden curriculum (e.g.,

Apple, 1990/2004; Ladson-Billings, 2006) or questionable methodology, particularly in the case of the word gap research conducted by Hart and Risley (1995), may give rise to these results, hegemonic narratives hold them up as proof that the "Other" is deficient, either genetically or culturally (Valencia & Solórzano, 1997/2012). Furthermore, the hegemonic power structure of the United States endorses a neoliberal agenda (Giroux, 1988; 2010; 2012; De Lissovoy, 2015), which builds on the principles of capitalism and the free market. "[Neoliberalism] is also a mode of pedagogy and set of social arrangements that uses education to win consent, produce consumer-based notions of agency and militarize reason in the service of war, profits, power and violence" (Giroux, 2012, n.p.). In our neoliberal society, many people in power believe that schools should be run as corporations, which has led to dramatic reforms built upon the principles of standardization.

As a result of neoliberal reforms, school appears to be a space that runs on the principles of survival of the fittest, further perpetuating oppression and inequity for the "Other," when what is happening is really survival of the wealthiest and most privileged (De Lissovoy, 2015). Giroux (2012) describes the effects of neoliberalism in U.S. public schools as follows:

> In the name of educational reform, reason is gutted of its critical potential and reduced to a deadening pedagogy of memorization, teaching to the test and classroom practices that celebrate mindless repetition and conformity… The notion that students come from different histories and embody different experiences, linguistic practices, cultures and talents is strategically ignored. (n.p.)

According to Giroux, the nature of instruction in public school should be dynamic, critical, reflective, and culturally relevant, but current reform initiatives (e.g., No Child Left Behind) create a "deadening pedagogy," which can lead to a fixed, linear, high-pressure, one-size-fits-all approach. Top-down policies, mandated by the hegemonic elite

(e.g., high-stakes standardized testing), legally require classroom teachers to enact at least some form of "deadening pedagogy," which works to suppress students from diverse backgrounds (the "Other"). Whether or not these policies were *intended* to perpetuate racial inequality, they are acceptable to the hegemonic elite because they do perpetuate racial inequality.

Critical Pedagogies: Counter-Narratives of the "Other"

Many scholars, such as Banks (1993; 1994), Freire (1970/2000), Giroux (1985; 1988; 2010; 2012), Ladson-Billings (1995; 2014), and Kumashiro (2000; 2001; 2009; 2015), have developed critical theoretical and pedagogical frameworks that aim to disrupt and transform the dominant neoliberal positioning of the "Other" in school. Their work, which serves as a counter-narrative, refutes the notion of the "Other" as deficient and argues that students from diverse backgrounds have culturally, socially, and cognitively rich, full, and complete lives. Primarily, these frameworks strive to expose and deconstruct dominant groups' hegemonic narratives in order to reveal the systemic inequities enacted upon the "Other." At the same time, I recognize that these scholars' conceptual frameworks are complex and although there are overlapping principles and ideologies, the scholars did not intend for them to be categorized together. However, for the sake of my study, I did need an all-encompassing term. The in-service teachers did not situate their work within any one specific framework; instead they used broad terms such as critical education or social justice teaching. With these complexities in mind, I refer to this body of work collectively as *critical pedagogies.*

Critical pedagogies position teachers as transformative intellectuals (Giroux, 1985). The pedagogical frameworks offered by these scholars insist that teachers should value, draw from, and incorporate the cultures of their students, thereby repositioning

diverse cultures and backgrounds as inherently worthy of dignity and respect, and thus as legitimate foundations for academic knowledge and inquiry. When teachers embrace and enact critical pedagogy, they not only work to liberate their students from oppression; they also work to liberate themselves from the "structure of domination" that neoliberal policies of standardization and mandated curricula have enforced upon them (Giroux, 2012).

One way teachers, particularly teachers of literacy, challenge inequity and reject "deadening pedagogy" (Giroux, 2012, n.p.) in the classroom is by sharing and discussing multicultural children's literature with their students (e.g., Brooks, 2006; DeNicolo & Franquiz, 2006; Enciso, 1997; Michael-Luna, 2008; Price-Dennis et al., 2016; Souto-Manning, 2009; Sutherland, 2005; Wolk, 2004). This is how the Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) describes their position on multicultural children's literature:

> At the CCBC, we use the term to mean books by and about people of color and First/Native Nations... All children deserve books in which they can see themselves and the world in which they live reflected. Multicultural literature belongs in every classroom and library—on the shelves and in the hands of children, librarians, and teachers. The challenge for librarians, teachers and others is identifying authentic, reliable books by and about people of color and First/Native Nations.
> (Retrieved from: https://ccbc.education.wisc.edu/books/multicultural.asp)

National literacy organizations such as the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the International Literacy Organization (ILA) advocate for the use of multicultural children's literature for critical classroom discussions on social and cultural issues. Like Giroux (2012), these literacy organizations seek to reform "deadening pedagogy" and position teachers as agents of change. For example, NCTE wrote in their position statement, "Teachers are finding . . . that some of the mandated scripted programs are crowding out of the curriculum the time needed for reading aloud,

independent reading of enjoyable and informational texts, writing, discussion, and in-depth exploration of literature" (NCTE position statement "On the Reading First Initiative," 2002). The NCTE also issued the following statement to share their vision of reading instruction for all students:

Resolved, that the National Council of Teachers of English continue to affirm the

- value of reading and literature for appreciation, learning, and enjoyment;
- critical need of instilling in young people a love of literature and reading for its own sake;
- important and critical roles that children's and young adult literature should play in the classroom; and

that NCTE recommend that

- a wide range of high-quality literature representing diverse experiences and perspectives be integrated into all content areas, including reading instruction;
- students engage in deep and extended experiences with full authentic texts rather than with adaptations (http://www.ncte.org/positions/statements/valueofliterature)

Since national literacy organizations take these positions, teacher education programs and national literacy conferences also devote a great amount of attention to providing learning opportunities for literacy teachers with multicultural children's literature.

Just as teachers are encouraged to use multicultural children's literature to support their work as critical educators, teacher educators also turn to multicultural children's literature to support teachers in developing their critical sociocultural knowledge. I draw on Brown's (2013) work to define sociocultural knowledge as "the social, cultural, economic, political and historical knowledge that informs how societies and schools operate" (p. 319). The term "critical sociocultural knowledge" (Brown, 2013) denotes a critical standpoint toward power structures; individuals demonstrate this form of

knowledge when they analyze how schools and societies operate in order to disrupt the dominant narratives. Research on both pre-service teachers (e.g., Barnes, 2006; Escamilla & Nathenson-Mejía, 2003; Glenn, 2012; 2015; Groenke, 2008; 2009; Haddix & Price-Dennis, 2013; Hill, 2012; Howrey & Whelan-Kim, 2009; Lohfink, 2014; Nathenson-Mejía & Escamilla, 2003; Price-Dennis & Souto-Manning, 2011; and Szesci et al., 2010) and in-service teachers (e.g., Heineke, 2014; Lewis & Ketter, 2008; Mathis, 2001) shows that by teaching with multicultural children's literature, teachers can develop and shift their perspectives, culturally connect with their students, and examine their own identities and positionalities. Furthermore, by analyzing multicultural children's literature together with their students, literacy teachers strive toward transforming their curriculum into one that respects diverse cultural and sociocultural knowledge (e.g., Seely Flint & Tropp Laman, 2012; Garcia & Garcia, 2016; Graff, 2010).

Unfortunately, critical pedagogies pose significant challenges for teachers. Teachers often experience tensions while learning critical pedagogies, and in some studies, some teacher subjects have rejected the foundations of these pedagogical frameworks altogether, refusing to accept that the public school institution perpetuates the oppression of students from diverse backgrounds (e.g., DeMulder, Stribling, & Day, 2014; Glazier, 2005; McVee, 2014). There is considerable evidence that although many teachers intend to enact critical pedagogical approaches, they are likely to fall short. For example, Ladson-Billings (2014) critiqued the uptake of her theory of culturally relevant pedagogy:

> I have grown increasingly dissatisfied with what seems to be a static conception of what it means to be culturally relevant. Many practitioners, and those who claim to translate research to practice, seem stuck in very limited and superficial notions of culture. Thus, the fluidity and variety within cultural groups has regularly been lost in discussions and implementations of culturally relevant pedagogy. Even when people have demonstrated a more expansive knowledge of

> culture, few have taken up the sociopolitical dimensions of the work, instead dulling its critical edge or omitting it altogether. (2014, p. 77)

Because the fundamental purpose of hegemonic institutions such as public schools is to perpetually re-inscribe dominant narratives (Apple, 1990/2004), it is not surprising that when practitioners/teachers within those schools adopt culturally relevant pedagogies, they sometimes suppress aspects of those pedagogies that invalidate hegemonic assumptions. For example, a student like Jerome might read stories featuring Black characters as part of his school's curriculum, but he might also be discouraged from talking openly about the characters' Blackness. I do not know how Jerome came to this conclusion. It may be due to overt/explicit teaching, for example, a teacher or principal may once have told Jerome not to discuss race, or it may be due to covert/unstated/tacit teaching, something students just pick up on as part of the hidden curriculum. One of the key challenges the three teacher participants faced was practicing critical pedagogies in a way that doesn't devolve into a dulled approach. Another factor that makes critical pedagogies difficult to enact is that literacy teachers who identify as critical educators often feel isolated and unsupported in their schools (e.g., Alford & Jetnikoff, 2016). To resist and work through these tensions and grow their practices, teachers may look to spaces outside of school (e.g., grassroots teacher organizations) that build on principles of community, shared beliefs, and commitment (e.g., Martinez, Valdez, & Cariaga, 2016). However, research also indicates that teachers shift their practices most often as a result of inquiry into their practice with students (e.g., Ball, 2009; Zion, Allen, & Jean, 2015). One of the tools teachers use in this kind of inquiry is multicultural children's literature.

Research indicates that when children from diverse backgrounds discuss multicultural children's literature, they are more likely to engage in critical conversations that draw from their cultural backgrounds and develop their thinking towards critical

social and cultural issues (e.g., race, class, and gender) (e.g., Brooks, 2006; Brooks, Brown, & Hampton, 2008; Sutherland, 2006). Researchers have also found that when discussing multicultural children's literature, students may speak back to and disrupt the way that they are positioned in school (e.g., DeNicolo & Franquiz, 2006; Enciso; 1997; Michael-Luna, 2008). These studies demonstrated that the use of multicultural children's literature in structured literature discussions supported the students towards disrupting and transforming their own educational experiences. However, these studies focused on the students' responses, rather than the teachers' pedagogy that facilitated those responses. My study complements and extends this body of literature by focusing on how teachers plan for and engage their students in critical discussions, as well as how they navigate those discussions.

In summary, both teacher education programs and professional development events teach preservice and inservice teachers to use multicultural children's literature to enact critical pedagogical approaches. However, the hegemonic nature of public schools works against this enactment of critical pedagogies and can leave teachers feeling unsupported in their work. At the same time, we also know that students are responsive and willing to discuss and talk back to such critical sociocultural issues as race, class, and gender. Much of the research is focused on the students' responses to multicultural children's literature, and very little research has examined the teacher's work in presenting multicultural children's literature and in guiding discussions of the literature in the classroom. Furthermore, none of the research addresses how critical teachers sustain and grow their practice over time, against the conflicting demands of the public school system. These are the gaps that my study aimed to address.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

In this study, I observed three inservice literacy teachers, who are committed to critical pedagogies, engage students in interactive read alouds with multicultural children's literature as one of their primary methods for navigating sociocultural issues with their students. The purpose of the study was to deepen our understanding of how literacy teachers, acting as transformative intellectuals (Giroux, 1985), sustain and grow their enactment of critical pedagogy. Through classroom observations and interviews, I learned how these teachers' lives and their out-of-school activities (such as membership in activist groups) motivated them in sustaining their critical approaches in their classrooms; I saw how they prepared to address critical issues while planning their lessons and selecting literature for discussion; and I examined what happened between these teachers and their students as they engaged together in whole group discussions about multicultural children's literature. Furthermore, I analyzed the teachers' discourses with their students as they sought to address critical issues of race, class, and gender within and across these whole group literacy events.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study analyzed the structures, strategies, and discourses of elementary school teachers who enact critical pedagogies as they conducted whole-group interactive read alouds of multicultural children's literature. In examining this specific pedagogical practice, I investigated the following research questions:

1. How do elementary teachers sustain and grow their enactment of critical pedagogies?
2. During whole-group discussions of multicultural children's literature, how do teachers address critical sociocultural knowledge and issues of inequity?

3. How do teachers who practice critical pedagogies navigate the critical encounters that arise when they discuss multicultural children's literature?

I report on the findings in response to research question one in Chapter Four, and I report on the findings for research questions two and three across Chapters Five and Six.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

In the following pages, I describe three related theoretical frameworks that guided my analysis of the classroom teachers' enactment of critical pedagogies through whole group discussions of multicultural children's literature. These three frameworks are critical literacy (Freire, 1970/2000), anti-oppressive education (Kumashiro, 2000; 2001; 2007; 2009; 2015), and humanizing critical sociocultural knowledge (Brown, 2013). I used these theoretical and conceptual frameworks to analyze the ways in which teachers disrupt one dominant narrative of the "Other" as deficient and replace this hegemonic narrative that perpetuates the maintenance of the dominant social groups' power with the understanding that we should continually aim to share more stories (from our own lives and from those around us) because they are necessary for the pursuit of an equitable society.

All three of the frameworks that guide this study—namely, critical literacy (Freire, 1970/2000), anti-oppressive education (Kumashiro, 2000; 2001; 2007; 2009; 2015), and humanizing critical sociocultural knowledge (Brown, 2013)—position the teacher as a *transformative intellectual* (Giroux, 1985). In defining this role, Giroux states that as transformative intellectuals, teachers "combine scholarly reflection and practice in the service of educating students to be thoughtful, active citizens" (p. 376). Furthermore, we can understand these teachers as "free men and women with a special dedication to the values of the intellect and the enhancement of the critical powers of the

young" (2012, n.p.). Transformative intellectuals, as distinct from "teacher technicians" (who are "groomed to service the needs of finance capital and produce students who are happy consumers and unquestioning future workers" [Giroux, 2012, n.p.]), can enact critical pedagogy because they "take up the ethical responsibility of recognizing that human life is conditioned but not determined" (2012, n.p.).

Critical Literacy

Paulo Freire (1970/2000) envisioned literacy as a form of freedom. In Freire's Brazil, the oppressed and the oppressors were from different socioeconomic backgrounds, and this socioeconomic disparity is what he articulated as the root of inequity. He argues that a revolution by the oppressed, in which the oppressed overthrow their oppressors and claim dominance over them, would merely perpetuate a cycle of oppression. Instead, Freire asserts that the oppressed must resist oppression by liberating both themselves *and* their oppressors:

> As long as they [the oppressed] live in the duality in which *to be* is *to be like*, and *to be like* is *to be like the oppressor,* this contribution [a liberating pedagogy] is impossible. The pedagogy of the oppressed is an instrument for their critical discovery that both they and their oppressors are manifestations of dehumanization. (p. 48)

For Freire, the pedagogy of the oppressed can only be developed *by* the oppressed, through praxis of action and reflection. In his work, Freire rejected the banking model of education, in which the teacher, as the sole provider of knowledge, deposits knowledge into the students, and proposed a problem-posing/ problem-solving model, in which dialogue between teacher and student is central:

> In problem-posing education, people develop their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process. (p. 83)

For Freire, dialogue serves as a tool to articulate reflection, which is a form of action. According to Freire, in order for teachers to enact critical pedagogy, they must engage in *praxis*: the constant work of action and reflection. Giroux's conception of teachers as transformative intellectuals, rather than technicians for the dominant groups, aligns with Freire's (1970/2000) concept of *praxis*. In addition, teachers must then support their students in praxis. Students need to acquire critical literacy (Freire & Macedo, 1987/2005; Morrell, 2004): the skills and tools necessary to both analyze their social worlds and then intervene to change them.

Freire and Macedo (1987/2005) provide a theoretical framework for developing critical, emancipatory literacy for students from marginalized groups. Arguing that dominant forms of literacy privilege certain groups over others, they assert that critical literacy is tied to an emerging consciousness and awareness of one's sociohistorical position in the world, which is developed through social interaction with other people. Freire and Macedo view the critical recognition and analysis of one's lived experiences ("reading the world") as a precondition for developing basic literacy skills ("reading the word"). They argue that students from oppressed groups should not be taught to read texts in isolation from the broader social contexts in which they live their lives, but rather that these students should critically analyze their lived experiences and contexts in order to better develop meaningful literacy skills. Therefore, as students learn to read texts related to the contexts of their lived experiences, they simultaneously learn to better "read" their experiences as texts, thereby refining their critical analyses of the world. Freire (1970/2000) describes this learning process as follows:

> True dialogue cannot exist unless the dialoguers engage in critical thinking – thinking which discerns an indivisible solidarity between the world and the people and admits of no dichotomy between them – thinking which perceives reality as a process, as transformation, rather than as a static entity-thinking which does not

> separate itself from action, but constantly immerses itself in temporality without the fear of the risks involved. (p. 92)

I apply Freire's term "dialoguers" to teachers and students. Freire describes the dynamic nature of our contexts and our thinking as temporary – not because our ideas are not sound, but because we must constantly revise them in order to keep up with the changing state of the world. In other words, a dynamic approach emphasizes, values, and facilitates process and transformation; a non-dynamic approach perceives reality as static and unchanging (such that once students learn about a reality once, they don't need to learn about it again). If Freire tells us that praxis is necessary for critical educators to maintain their pedagogical stance and perspectives, and since (literacy) teachers feel burdened, isolated, and unsupported by the demands of current education reform (Apple, 1990/2004; De Lissovoy, 2010; 2012; 2015; Giroux, 2012), then they are likely dealing with constant tensions as they seek the space to act and critically reflect on their actions. There is very little empirical work on literacy teachers' practice of praxis in the classroom context. My study addresses this gap in research by examining teachers' art of praxis across classroom contexts and across time.

Anti-Oppressive Education

My study of inservice teachers was also guided by Kumashiro's (2000; 2001; 2015) framework of anti-oppressive education. This framework developed from two central ideas: all stories are political, and all stories are partial representations. At its core, an anti-oppressive education framework questions the notion of a single truth or a single answer. Even when we think we know the truth, or we think we have thoughtfully covered a perspective, there is always more to deconstruct and more to illuminate with additional perspectives. Using these ideas as a starting point opens up the space for discussion that is not designed to have one "right" answer. For example, the overt

narrative of public school situates it as a neutral institution that promotes equality for all. However, Apple (1990/2004) challenges this narrative by calling attention to the institution's covert role in perpetuating the dominant groups' ideological perspectives:

> How, *concretely*, may official knowledge represent ideological configurations of the dominant interests in a society?...(1) how do the basic day to day regularities of school contribute to students learning these ideologies?... The first of these questions to the hidden curriculum in school – the tacit teaching to students of norms, values, and dispositions that goes on simply by their living in and coping with the institutional expectations and routines of schools day in and day out for a number of years. (p. 13)

The hidden curriculum is the tacit common sense shaped by public school's routines and expectations, including the promotion of standardization of content areas and other neo-liberal reform moves. Through the lens of an anti-oppressive education framework, teachers and students can disrupt the overt narratives of public school and begin to look at the institution and its purpose from multiple perspectives in order to uncover the covert hidden curriculum while at the same time lifting the voices of the "Other."

Although diverse literature is an important resource for developing cultural awareness, an anti-oppressive education framework can support teachers to establish that no single narrative is capable of telling the whole story of a people. As Kumashiro (2001) writes, "The naming of difference, then, whether in activist communities or inclusive curricula, can serve less to describe who a group is, and more to prescribe who a group ought to be" (p. 5). When the voice of the "Other" is brought into the classroom, we should not expect it to tell us about difference. Nor should a single representation be overgeneralized as "the whole story" of a people. Often, in previous research, teacher educators focused on supporting preservice and inservice teachers to develop a culturally relevant pedagogy because, as a society, our student population continues to become more diverse. Therefore, teacher education programs want to prepare teachers to teach

students from diverse backgrounds, and diverse children's literature is one way for teachers to "show" representations of diversity. Kumashiro (2001) writes, "Some stories reinforce hegemonic frameworks for thinking about and acting in the world, others challenge them, and still others do both. Thus, stories always have political effects" (p. 6). As Kumashiro warns us, when teachers share stories about who they believe the "Other" to be, they can as easily perpetuate stereotypes as dismantle them.

Kumashiro's theory asks teachers to resist repetition, embrace crisis, and work for change through reflection and action. Kumashiro's work teaches me that common sense is hegemonic and calls the notion of best practices into question. Many teachers and teacher educators conceive of best practices as attainable and therefore static. In other words, teachers can attain a level of mastery of best practices, and at that point their learning and growth can stop. I think that Kumashiro would argue that a static conception of any intellectual work perpetuates the status quo. Through out this paper, when I refer to crisis, I am drawing on Kumashiro's (2000) definition of crisis as follows:

> …Learning things that force one to re-learn or *unlearn* what one had previously learned cannot always be done rationally…I argue that learning about oppression and unlearning one's worldview can be upsetting and paralyzing to students [and teachers], and thus, can lead them into a what I call the "paradoxical condition of learning and unlearning." Students [and teachers] can simultaneously become both "unstuck" (distanced from the ways they have always thought, no longer so complicit with oppression) and "stuck" (intellectually paralyzed so that they need to work through the feeling and thoughts before moving on with the more "academic" part of a lesson.) (p. 44)

Although crisis feels fundamentally unpleasant, I agree with Kumashiro that in order for change to occur, we must be in crisis and working through crisis. From an anti-oppressive education framework, I believe that all students (including students from the dominant culture) and teachers need to participate in anti-oppressive frameworks in order for all of us as a society to work towards equity for all. In our current moment, many anti-

oppressive and critical educators are working to recognize the intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) of our identities. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that the oppressed and the oppressors are not a clear-cut binary. My perspective (and I think Kumashiro would agree) is that students and teachers identify in a multitude of ways, and often those who are members of dominant groups in terms of their racial and/or socioeconomic identities may have other identities in which they experience oppression (such as religion, gender, sexuality, and/or disability). Therefore, oppression can occur along multiple intersecting axes (Crenshaw, 1991). And, people with marginalized and oppressed identities can also be *agents* of oppression. That is, people can both be oppressed *and* engage in oppression of others.

Humanizing Critical Sociocultural Knowledge

Lisa Delpit (1995/2006; 2006) argues that children from marginalized cultures need to be taught the "codes" of the mainstream culture in order to succeed in our society. But Delpit cautions that when teachers set out to teach these students how to interact, talk, and write the way White elites do, they must not do so in a way that presents this "culture of power" as superior to their home cultures. Brown's recent (2013) theory of *humanizing critical sociocultural knowledge* helps us to navigate this kind of pedagogical conflict. Brown's work seeks to transform teaching and teacher education programs so that teachers can disrupt the hegemony of public school, teach the culture of power, and reposition marginalized youth in equitable ways that bridge reflection and action. Brown particularly emphasizes the need for those working with African American students to build sociocultural knowledge to recognize the humanity of those students and to critique the inequitable system within which they are learning.

Brown (2013) argues for a humanizing, critical sociocultural knowledge that is improvisational, situated, and all-encompassing. Such knowledge, she argues, has the

potential to transform the possibilities for teaching and learning. In order to do so, however, it must be *situated* within the unique context of that classroom and school; *improvisational*, in that it can be used flexibly and creatively in response to an ever-evolving context; and *all-encompassing*, in that it must recognize the role of the sociocultural in every schooling experience. In my understanding of Brown's framework, I recognized the structure of interactive read aloud with multicultural children's literature as a primary event in which inservice literacy teachers addressed critical and sociocultural issues; therefore, I interpret it as a structure that met her criteria for the context of humanizing sociocultural knowledge. This literacy structure in the teacher participants' classrooms allowed the work to be situated, all-encompassing, and improvisational. According to Brown, it is not enough for teachers to have a theoretical understanding of race, language, and power; teacher education must also support them in flexibly applying that knowledge in their classrooms.

Summary

Collectively, these three theoretical frames enabled me to study the classroom teachers' enactment of critical pedagogies as dynamic, political, intellectual, co-constructed with their students, and unfinished. Freire's (1970/2000) theory of critical literacy provided the concept of praxis; Kumashiro's (2000; 2001; 2009; 2015) theory of anti-oppressive education provided the foundation that all stories are partial and political; and Brown's (2013) theory of humanizing critical sociocultural knowledge provided the concept that the teacher's enactment of critical pedagogies is both planned and unplanned. Across these three frames, the teacher is responsible for providing the pedagogical conditions that enable students to develop and maintain their own cultural competence and critical consciousness. With these frameworks, I analyzed the teachers'

enactment with the understanding that the "teachers' task is not to mold students but to encourage human agency, to provide the conditions for students to be self-determining and to struggle for a society that is both autonomous and democratic" (Giroux, 2012, n.p.). Each of these theories guided the decision I made in the design of the study, including the collection and analysis of data. In Chapter Three, I provide a more detailed description of these methodological decisions.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This study builds on research related to the enactment of critical pedagogies by inservice literacy teachers. It is grounded in research that focuses on literacy teachers' use of multicultural children's literature as a pedagogical resource to enact critical pedagogies. In this chapter, I discuss these bodies of literature, explaining how they inform my own work. This literature review comprises four sections: "Defining Critical Pedagogies," "Teachers' Tensions in Enacting Critical Pedagogies," "Overview of Multicultural Children's Literature as a Resource," and "Enacting Critical Pedagogies with Multicultural Children's Literature."

In the first section, "Defining Critical Pedagogies," I review critical pedagogical frameworks that literacy teachers who identify as critical educators may draw upon to define their pedagogical practices. In the second section, "Teachers' Tensions", I review literature that sheds light on the tensions and challenges inservice teachers face when striving to enact their critical pedagogies. In the third section, "Overview of Multicultural Children's Literature as a Resource," I review research on multicultural children's literature as a pedagogical resource. In the fourth section, "Enacting Critical Pedagogies," I review literature that examines how literacy teachers use classroom discussions of multicultural children's literature to enact critical pedagogies.

DEFINING CRITICAL PEDAGOGIES

In the end, pedagogy is not, as many conservatives argue, about immersing young people in predefined and isolated bits of information, but about the issue of agency and how it can be developed in the interest of deepening and expanding the meaning and purpose of democratization and the formative cultures that make it possible. (Giroux, 2012)

This section presents foundational frameworks of critical pedagogies. Each framework, in its own way, resists the inherent hegemony of inequity and oppression in public school by affirming students' cultural backgrounds as rich components of a literacy curriculum, and by supporting students' development of critical consciousness. I outline the tenets of a number of critical pedagogies that foreground culture and power, including *critical literacy* (Freire, 1970/2000; Janks, 2010; Morrell, 2004), *multicultural education* (Banks, 1993; 1994; 2014; Nieto, 1994; Sleeter & Grant, 2008), *culturally relevant pedagogy* (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2014), *culturally sustaining pedagogy* (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014), and *anti-oppressive education* (Kumashiro, 2000, 2001; Kumashiro & Ngo, 2007). Throughout this study, as I explained in Chapter One, I use the broad term *critical pedagogies* to refer to the social, cultural, and cognitive work of teachers who draw from one or more of these approaches.

Collectively, the broad concept of critical pedagogy helps us understand the work that teachers, who should rightly be considered public intellectuals, are trying to accomplish when they design literacy curricula that emphasize critical perspectives on issues including diversity, inclusivity, social justice, power, agency, cultural competence, academic success, equity, citizenship, compassion, community, and global participation. I review these frameworks because it is likely that literacy teachers who enact critical pedagogies draw from one or more of them. As stated in Chapter One, I draw on two of these five frameworks—critical literacy and anti-oppressive education—to interpret the data on three elementary literacy teachers' enactment of critical pedagogies.

Critical Literacy

Critical literacy is most often based in the work of Paulo Freire, who argues that through literacy one may grow critical consciousness about the world: "To exist, humanly, is to *name* the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears

to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new *naming*" (1970/2000, p. 69). According to Freire, only through language, through dialogue, can people become critical of and transform the world. Critical literacy builds on this foundation, most often examining how texts may be read in ways that examine power relations inherent to the language of the text.

Many scholars (e.g., De Lissovoy, 2015; hooks, 1994; Janks, 2010; 2013; Morrell, 2007) have grounded their work in Freire's conceptual frameworks and expanded on his ideas to further develop the possibilities of critical pedagogies and critical literacy. Janks's (2010) model of critical literacy focuses on understanding the relationship between language and power. She identifies four interdependent "orientations" of critical literacy (p. 23): domination, access, diversity, and design. Domination refers to the power that language holds to maintain and reproduce the power hierarchy. Access refers to the access that students should have to the dominant forms of language. Diversity is the recognition and response to the wide range of possibilities for reading and writing as a result of our "changing consciousness." According to Janks, as much as students should feel at ease with diversity—"alternative and additional ways of being the world"—she also warns that "difference tends to be organized according to relations of power, into hierarchies, and it can lead as easily to domination and conflict as to change and innovation" (p. 25). The fourth component of Janks's critical literacy framework is design. This component "recognizes the importance of human creativity and students' ability to generate an infinite number of new meanings" (p. 25).

As Janks explains, these four components are interdependent, and they are all in constant tension with the danger of maintaining domination. For example, returning to the notion of access, Janks considers how accessing dominant forms may enable the maintaining of the power structures because the dominant form, now enacted by the

"Other," continues to exist at the top of the power hierarchy. But on the other hand, Janks argues, "If we deny students access, we perpetuate their marginalization in a society that continues to recognize the value and importance of these forms" (p. 24). Janks leaves this core question regarding the "access paradox" for us to grapple with as we contend with her framework of critical literacy: "How does one provide access to dominant forms, while at the same time valuing and promoting the diverse language and literacies of our students and in the broader society?" (p. 24). Janks (2013) studied critical literacy in action in Mexican American Studies classes at a high school in Tucson, Arizona. She observed the students identifying with the literature they were reading and engaging in thoughtful and thought-provoking discussions about sociocultural issues. "Because the programme makes space in the curriculum for the discourses that these students inhabit… Here we see power working to include diversity to produce higher graduation rates and access to education for Latinos" (p. 229). Thus, when teachers' enact critical literacy pedagogy, their students learn to engage with texts in ways that support their own critical consciousness and work towards change.

Multicultural Education

Banks (1993; 1994) developed his framework of multicultural education in the early 1990s; since then, he and many other scholars have refined and expanded it. Banks proposes four approaches or levels that form a continuum for enactment of multicultural education. Of these, the final two levels are the most in line with my view of critical pedagogy. In the first level, *The Contributions Approach*, teachers incorporate isolated multicultural events in order to celebrate holidays or heroes, apart from the primary classroom curriculum. With this approach, the teachers and students are studying the Other as different and apart from the dominant groups, and according to Banks (2014), "the class studies little or nothing about the ethnic groups before or after the special event

or the occasion" (p. 53). The next level of Banks's framework is *The Additive Approach*. At this level, teachers add content, concepts, themes, and perspectives to the curriculum without changing the structure of the curriculum itself. Banks points to this level as the first step of a more radical curriculum reform effort; however, he explains the shortcomings of this level as "the viewing of ethnic content from the perspectives of mainstream historians, writers, artists, and scientists… the events, concepts, issues, and problems selected for study are selected using Mainstream-Centric and Euro-Centric criteria and perspectives" (p. 53).

Banks's next level is *The Transformation Approach*. At this level, teachers change the structure of the curriculum to enable students to view concepts, issues, events, and themes from the perspectives of diverse ethnic and cultural groups. "Important aims of the transformation approach are to teach students to think critically and to develop skills to formulate, document, and justify their conclusions and generalizations" (p. 55). In Banks's final level, *The Social Action Approach,* students make decisions about important social issues and take action to help solve them. It is at this level that teachers empower and encourage students to become politically active citizens. For purposes of this study, I see the Transformation and Social Action approaches as most aligned with teachers' enactment of critical pedagogies; teachers practice critical pedagogies effectively when they move students from thinking at the micro level to the macro level on issues of race, class, gender, and other intersecting categories of inequity.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Ladson-Billings (1995) observed successful teachers of African-American students and found that they employed what she calls a *culturally relevant pedagogy*. Ladson-Billings (1995) outlines three criteria for culturally relevant pedagogy:

- "Students must experience academic success" (p. 160). This means effectively helping students read, write, speak, compute, pose and solve higher-order problems, and engage in peer review of problem solutions.
- "Students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence" (p. 160). The key for teachers is to value and build on skills that students bring from their home culture.
- "Students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order" (p. 160). Teachers help students recognize, critique, and change social inequities.

The teachers in Ladson-Billings's study (1995) believed that their pedagogy was an art form that was always evolving. They placed their students' needs at the heart of their instruction, and they engaged in a constant effort to build a community of learners. Ladson-Billings emphasizes that a culturally relevant pedagogy should be principally "committed to collective, not merely individual, empowerment" (1995, p. 160). A culturally relevant pedagogy involves a "willingness to nurture" the students' home cultures, along with a respect for the school culture.

In 2014, Ladson-Billings revisited her framework of culturally relevant pedagogy in response to Paris's (2012) theory of culturally sustaining pedagogy. In this article, Ladson-Billings (2014) agreed with Paris's (2012) concern regarding the manner in which many educators were reducing, as well as co-opting her ideas. She stated, "My work on culturally relevant pedagogy has taken on a life of its own, and what I see in the literature and sometimes practice is totally unrecognizable to me" (2014, pp. 81-82). Ladson-Billings named state departments, school districts, and individual teachers as referring to their curriculum as "culturally relevant pedagogy" when all they did was add a single unit or a few books on people of color. Ladson-Billings's (2014) concerns about

teachers using a "static conception of what it means to be culturally relevant" (p. 77) and "dulling the critical edge" (p. 77) of her theory are particularly relevant for my study. Due to the hegemonic ideology of public school as a neutral, standardized, color-blind, and static space, teachers often face tensions or "crises" in enacting critical pedagogies, which stands in opposition to and serves to invalidate the hegemonic narrative of the institution.

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

Paris (2012) returned to Ladson-Billings's (1995) framework in order to revise and expand on her original tenets of academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness. Paris (2012) expanded the framework of culturally relevant pedagogy in order to trouble the static conception of culturally relevant pedagogy, or a superficial uptake of culture inclusiveness that does not invoke the sociopolitical dimensions of the work (Ladson-Billings, 2014), and broaden the scope of culturally relevant pedagogy to address the need for cultural pluralism. Although Ladson-Billings's (1995) research began as an examination of the practices of successful teachers of African American students, which then developed into her framework of culturally relevant pedagogy, it is important to note that this framework was not offered to only benefit African American students. Instead, Ladson-Billings states that culturally relevant pedagogy is good for *all* students. Therefore, enacting culturally relevant pedagogy is one way for teachers to emancipate children from all backgrounds. By expanding *culturally relevant* to *culturally sustaining*, Paris (2012) seeks to address the broad scope of diversity that exists in the K-12 classroom, and he specifically advocates for educators to sustain cultures and languages that are in danger of being erased:

> The term culturally sustaining requires that our pedagogies be more than responsive of or relevant to the cultural experiences and practices of young

> people—it requires that they support young people in sustaining the cultural and linguistic competence of their communities while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence. Culturally sustaining pedagogy, then, has as its explicit goal supporting multilingualism and multiculturalism in practice and perspective for students and teachers. That is, culturally sustaining pedagogy seeks to perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling. (p. 95)

With this revision, Paris speaks back to some educators' concerns regarding the uptake of culturally relevant pedagogy by expanding the framework to more fully embrace the plural and evolving nature of youth identity and cultural practices while still holding onto the "heritage practices of communities of color" (Paris & Alim, 2014, p. 85). He also draws from critical literacy frameworks when he stresses the importance of access to dominant cultural competence for all students. Again, Paris's culturally sustaining pedagogy supports the notion that critical frameworks intend to illuminate and build on students' cultural identities, thereby offering counter-narratives to the dominant discourse in order to liberate the "Other" and dismantle power hierarchies.

Anti-Oppressive Education

Kumashiro's (2000; 2001; 2007; 2015) framework of anti-oppressive education exists in a blurred space between critical theory and poststructuralist theory. Kumashiro (2015) explains, "We do not often question certain practices and perspectives because they are masked by or couched in concepts to which we often feel social pressure to conform, including such concepts as tradition, professionalism, morality, and normalcy" (p. xxxv). According to Kumashiro, the very notion of "common sense" is oppressive. The key tenets of anti-oppressive education are that all stories are partial and all stories are political. I understand Kumashiro's use of "political," as a counter-concept to the notion of neutrality. In other words, when dominant social groups' claim certain spaces, such as public school as neutral, and thus as equal and fair to all participants, but we know that is not the reality for the participants that are members of the "Other." Then we

reexamine those same spaces as political because we know that these participants' livelihood and well-being is impacted in many ways in this space. And that is what I understand political to mean for the purpose of this study– it is the impact – the effect of the decisions made in the interest of or resistance to power. On the topic of the "Other"—the oppressed—Kumashiro (2001) writes:

> Using texts as ways to know Others will always work against oppression in contradictory ways. This is also true when we acknowledge that texts can never tell the 'whole' story, since even texts used to tell 'representative' stories are problematic when we expect that they actually 'tell' us about difference. (p. 7)

Drawing from this theory, one cannot expect to ever reach a fixed solution or have a complete story. Furthermore, just as Ladson-Billings (2014) expressed her frustration about educators' uptake of her theory in superficial ways, Kumashiro here argues that surface level strategies to include the voice of the "Other" is likely to cause more harm than good because they will perpetuate stereotypes, rather than dismantle them. Kumashiro's theory of anti-oppressive education conceptualizes teaching and learning as a constant process of "working through" without ever fully working it out.

Summary

Although each of these pedagogies has a distinct perspective and objective, they also overlap in many significant ways. First, each of these pedagogical frameworks offers a perspective on students, families, and schools that serves as a counter-narrative to the dominant discourse. The counter-narratives are appreciative and offer multiple perspectives on students from diverse backgrounds, thereby refuting the "gaps" and deficiencies that the dominant narrative tends to emphasize. Instead, proponents of these frameworks argue that students and families from diverse cultural backgrounds live abundant, rather than deficient, lives. Second, these frameworks promote the strength of community and advocate solidarity as a way disrupt dominant power hierarchies. Third,

these pedagogical frameworks all provide teachers with theoretical underpinnings for teaching for transformation and supporting students' development of critical consciousness. These students may then continue to disrupt and dismantle the dominant narrative as critical citizens.

Many teachers do not necessarily situate themselves within only one of these frameworks, but rather think and work at the intersection of multiple frameworks as they consider the purpose of their work with students. According to Morrell (2004), critical pedagogies can "provide teachers and researchers with a better means of understanding the role that schools play within a race-, class-, and gender- divided society" (p. 21). However, these pedagogical frameworks do not typically specify the methods—the practice—of how to teach with critical pedagogies. The scholars envision teachers enacting critical pedagogies across all content areas, and in the field of literacy education, teachers are often advised and taught to enact critical pedagogies by teaching multicultural children's literature. It is not important to this study to categorize the specific frameworks from which literacy teachers draw; rather, I focused on how these teachers enacted, sustained, and grew critical pedagogies through their practice of literature discussions with multicultural children's literature. My study aimed to complement these theoretical frameworks by investigating practical approaches that inservice teachers use.

TEACHERS' TENSIONS IN ENACTING CRITICAL PEDAGOGIES

Scholarship in the field of literacy education and critical education indicates that teachers' own cultural backgrounds influence their practice with students (Au & Mason, 1981; Delpit, 2006; Glazier, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Larson & Irvine, 1999). Specifically, teachers' backgrounds affect their competence and confidence to address

diversity and sociocultural knowledge in curricula. In this section, I review literature from the last four decades that points to the tensions (e.g., a sense of cultural mismatch, lack of preparation, or lack of support) that often arise when literacy teachers attempt to enact critical pedagogies in their classrooms.

Au and Mason's (1981) study serves as an early example that teachers should consider the culture of their students when developing classroom routines and procedures for instruction. They examined the participation structures that two teachers used during reading comprehension discussions with six second-grade Hawaiian students. Au and Mason (1981) hypothesized that teachers who shared the rights of talk with their students would facilitate greater academic achievement than those teachers who held exclusive rights. They called this the *balance of rights hypothesis*, and their findings supported their hypothesis. The teacher who developed a balance of rights during discussion had worked with children of Hawaiian ancestry for five years and understood that these children were accustomed to story-like talk in their home culture. The teacher who allowed for this open structure of response during reading comprehension discussions had 80% of her students engaged, whereas the second teacher, who had no experience teaching Hawaiian children, insisted that the children raise their hands to be called on and allowed only one child to speak at a time. Only 43% of this teacher's students engaged during the conversation. The teacher with low student engagement was conducting her classroom discussion in a traditional, dominant structure, in which the teacher manages behavior as much as she provides instruction. This teacher was not aware of her students' cultural background and consequently misinterpreted their desire to talk without following the traditional method as a lack of regard for classroom structures.

To help understand the low percentage of engagement associated with the traditional teaching method in Au and Mason's (1981) study, I turn to Larson and

Irvine's (1999) concept of reciprocal distancing. Larson and Irvine concluded that when teachers choose to separate their experiential background from their students' backgrounds, a phenomenon of *reciprocal distancing* keeps both teachers and students from accepting each other. Larson and Irvine (1999) interviewed and observed nine teachers (including White and African American teachers) in an urban school district in the northeast United States. One finding that emerged from the analysis of interview transcripts and field notes was that "teachers' literacy practices were influenced by beliefs about their students' abilities and background" (p. 394). They defined reciprocal distancing as "a discourse process in which teachers and students invoke existing sociohistorical and political distances between their communities in classroom interactions" (p. 394). In other words, the teachers, who did "not live in their school's neighborhood" and were likely middle-class, applied their middle-class standards and rules to the students in their classrooms. For example, both the White and African American teachers expressed dissatisfaction with their students' home life and attributed their "poor literacy skills" (p. 394) to their lack of experiences at home. "They mentioned museum trips and being read to at home as examples of the kinds of experiences they believe are necessary for school literacy, experiences Heath [1983] documents as characteristics of middle-class language socialization" (p. 394). Due to their ideological beliefs, the teachers, regardless of their own race, generally positioned their students from "urban" backgrounds as culturally and cognitively deficient, and this played out in the teachers' classroom discourses with their students.

The phenomenon of reciprocal distancing becomes a greater concern within the context of what many have called the demographic imperative (e.g., Banks, 1993; 1994; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Gay & Howard, 2000). This occurs when predominantly White,

middle-class teachers teach in public school classrooms, where the student body is growing increasingly diverse.

The phrase "the demographic imperative" has been used to draw the conclusion—increasingly inescapable—that the educational community must take action in order to alter the disparities deeply embedded in the American educational system. Documented and disseminated over a number of years, evidence for the demographic imperative includes statistics and other information in three areas– the diverse student population, the homogenous teaching force, and the "demographic divide," or the marked disparities in educational opportunities, resources, and achievement among student groups that differ from one another racially, culturally, linguistically, and socioeconomically. (Cochran-Smith, 2004, p. 4)

Educators, however, should not assume that White teachers do not want to include the cultural ideologies of their students, but instead should understand that there are likely to be cultural gaps and cultural misunderstandings between teacher and students, especially when teachers lack pedagogical training in intercultural competence **(**Hachfeld, Hahn, Schroeder, Anders, & Kunter, 2015; Harris Russell, McDonald, Jones, & Weaver, 2016). These gaps could lead to teaching that maintains the status quo, rather than disrupting it. In particular, well-meaning teachers may uphold the status quo by perpetuating "color-blind" ideologies: "by acting 'as if' we do not see color, we reinforce the distance between us, rather than the similarity" (Garcia, 1999, p. 308).

For example, Harris Russell et al. (2016) interviewed four White middle school teachers in Texas and examined these teachers' perceptions of their pedagogy amidst the state's increasing diversity, with a focus on how these teachers described culturally relevant teaching. Each of the participants had more than fifteen years of teaching experience, and the researchers analyzed data from interviews and life histories to situate

their perceptions (they did not observe the teachers' classroom practices). In their analysis, the researchers developed the *cultural lens continuum* and used it to position the teachers' stances toward culturally relevant pedagogy. They found that these four White teachers' understandings and (reported) enactments of culturally relevant pedagogy were largely superficial, echoing Ladson-Billings's (2014) concern about the ways in which her ideas were being taken up.

Harris Russell et al. (2016) found that these teachers aimed to assimilate the students into the dominant language and culture; addressed multicultural topics only in isolated events; focused on the behavior of Black and Hispanic students, rather than acknowledging those students' academic strengths; and did not reach out to students or families to incorporate their daily experiences or family lives into classroom instruction. Harris Russell and colleagues (2016) placed these teachers in the early stages of their continuum, which they categorized as the microscopic (p. 15) and telescopic lens (also described as "limited views," p. 15)—stages similar to Banks's (1993; 1994) early stages of multicultural education. Even in these early stages, the teachers recognized culture in the curriculum, but they did not intend for their pedagogy to be transformative. As a result of this study (Harris Russell et al., 2016), the researchers added two lenses to their continuum: the panoramic ("inclusive views," p. 15) and the holographic ("more expansive, holistic, three-dimensional perspectives," p. 15). It is in these two stages that transformative teaching and learning occurs. The researchers argue that teachers need support first to study and reflect on their own cultural identities and then to come together in a community with their students and families to engage in dialogue and reflection. Through these steps, teachers can develop their own critical consciousness while deepening their understandings of culturally relevant pedagogy.

Similarly, Alford and Jetnikoff's study (2016) found that teachers experienced challenges when striving to enact critical pedagogies. They worked with four high school English as a Second Language teachers in Queensland, Australia to study their enactment of critical literacy with English Language Learners. These teachers were committed to critical literacy as a pedagogical framework, but the researchers concluded that the four teachers' orientations to critical literacy varied, and as a result the students' learning experiences were shaped by the affordances and constraints of their teacher's understandings. Drawing on Janks's Synthesis Model of Critical Literacy (2010) and critical discourse analysis, the authors concluded that the teachers were enacting a diluted form of critical literacy instruction, because 1) these teachers felt limited agency to enact critical literacy within the constraints of the mandated local curriculum, 2) the teachers did not have any support in their current school context to further develop their understandings of critical literacy (e.g., professional development or resources), and 3) the teachers did not have adequate time to prepare or implement a critical literacy curriculum. The authors (and teachers) did not want to reduce critical literacy to a "single, formulaic method… Instead, it is understood to be contingent on localised context and the material resources, including human, that exist in these contexts" (p. 111). The teachers in this study did not know how to incorporate their students' lives into the mandated local curriculum; nor did they understand how to bridge their students' lives to the broader context. Therefore, the researchers concluded by highlighting the "need for greater professional development with such teachers in order to expand their understandings and practice so that it might encompass more fully the goals of critical literacy" (p. 121).

In the current era of neoliberal reform that strives for the standardization of the curriculum, dominant narratives encourage teachers to believe in the benefits of a color-

blind ideology based on the assumption that American society is post-racial (e.g., Copenhaver-Johnson, 2006; De Lissovoy, 2015; Garcia, 1999; Giroux, 2012; Hachfeld et al., 2015; Hollingworth, 2008; Winn & Behizadeh, 2011). Copenhaver-Johnson (2006) explains that issues of race and racism are seldom discussed in White contexts because the myth of meritocracy still holds true. The idea of meritocracy depends on the assumption that the school institution is color-blind. "Thus, as students perform well or poorly on tests, they are encouraged to understand this performance as a reflection of their own innate capacity and worth, which is, in the same moment, measured and set against the capacity and worth of their peers and competitors" (De Lissovoy, 2015, p. 37). Furthermore, Hachfeld and colleagues (2015) presented two opposing cultural beliefs that teachers embrace when teaching immigrant students: multiculturalism and colorblindness. These researchers hypothesized that teachers who taught with a multicultural approach would be more professionally competent (e.g., interplay between content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, motivational orientations, and self-regulatory behaviors) when teaching immigrant students. They concluded that colorblind beliefs and ideals were problematic: "…The more strongly participants endorsed colorblind beliefs the less they reported being willing to adapt their teaching to the specific needs of immigrant students and culturally diverse classes" (p. 51). Often, the colorblind stance stems from teachers' desire to treat all students equally, but a "kids are kids" narrative rarely leads to teachers planning thoughtfully for classrooms of diverse learners. The researchers concluded that it is much more effective to teach multicultural curricula instead of using colorblind approaches. Like Alford and Jetnikoff (2016), who call for increased professional development in this area, Hachfeld et al. (2015) argue that teachers need support to be prepared to teach a multicultural curriculum so that they can

continually cultivate their willingness and confidence to teach immigrant students in meaningful, empowering ways.

Summary

These studies illuminate the challenges teachers face when striving to enact critical pedagogies that disrupt dominant (White) cultural norms in school. These challenges include the phenomenon of reciprocal distancing (Larson & Irvine, 1999). Furthermore, the literature revealed that although many teachers believed that they were teaching to address diversity in hopeful and positive ways, they often felt unprepared and unsupported due to limited opportunities for professional development, community, and dialogue to support them in enacting these pedagogies at a transformation level (Banks, 1993; 1994; 2014). Within this era of deadening pedagogy, teachers are increasingly faced with the tensions of defining their role as public intellectuals even as the push for standardized curricula pulls them back into the role of technical administrators. This is a constant push and pull that the teachers have to negotiate.

Next, I review literature on multicultural children's literature as a resource for critical pedagogy that has the potential to support teachers through these tensions. This section presents a somewhat chronological narration of how educators have used multicultural children's literature as a resource for enacting critical pedagogies, as well as some insight into how authors, publishers, and educators currently position multicultural children's literature.

MULTICULTURAL CHILDREN'S LITERATURE AS A PEDAGOGICAL RESOURCE

In this study, I examine how teachers enact and reflect on critical pedagogies within the particular context of discussions about multicultural children's literature. To that end, this section begins with a consideration of how multicultural children's

literature has been defined and positioned in educational settings. Multicultural children's literature has the potential to offer us multiple perspectives, instead of the single story regarding the "Other" as inferior that is often tacitly promoted by dominant cultures of power in our nation. According to Adichie (2009), "The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story" (n. p.). National literacy organizations (e.g., NCTE and ILA) advocate for the use of multicultural children's literature as an instructional tool and shared resource that can support both teachers and students as they work on critical issues such as race, class, gender, power, and equity.

Scholars and national literacy organizations believe that multicultural children's literature can "truly promote pluralism, and by helping students read the world by reading the words, teachers expand their students' abilities to develop their critical thinking" (Yoon, Simpson, & Haag, 2010, p. 116). Multicultural children's literature may be referred to as culturally conscious literature (Gay, 1990; Sims; 1982; Sims-Bishop, 1990; 2012), multiethnic literature (Harris, 1997), culturally relevant literature (Robbins, 2002), global literature (Short, 2009), culturally authentic literature (Fox & Short, 2003), and diverse literature (weneeddiversebooks.org). This is not an exhaustive list, and it is important to note that each term brings with it its own definition. For the purpose of this study, I use the term *multicultural children's literature* because most researchers in the field use this term.

In her foundational work, *Shadow and Substance* (1982), Sims recognized the transformative potential of multicultural children's literature for African American children, as well as the limited availability of this literature. She surveyed and critiqued many children's books about African Americans, and she categorized children's literature about African Americans into three categories. *Social conscience* books are usually

written by non-African American authors to depict the historical struggles of African Americans. These books encourage their White readers to sympathize with African Americans. *Melting pot* books are written for an integrated audience. Their message is that under our skin, we are all the same. *Culturally conscious* books are the most authentic category and directly address the vast experiences of African American communities and culture. They are usually written by and for African Americans. Culturally conscious literature portrays African American culture through language, stories, and illustrations. Among the books reviewed by Sims in the early 1980s, only a small few met her criteria for culturally conscious literature. I will share recent statistics later in this section that indicate that we have made progress in terms of increasing the resources available to teachers.

Nearly a decade after Sims published her work, Harris (1990) traced the history of African American literature, and she concluded by advocating for culturally conscious literature for African American children and all children because she saw a "naturalness about [culturally conscious texts]" (p. 552). The book authors were members of the cultural group, and therefore, Harris read their stories as authentic forms of advocacy and celebration of Black youth. She believed these books would be more meaningful to African American students than books by and about White people.

Since Sims (1982) published her foundational work on culturally conscious literature, and Harris (1990) wrote about the necessity of this literature for African American youth in particular, this specific category has become increasingly central to the discussion of authenticity in multicultural children's literature. In their book *Stories Matter*, Fox and Short (2003) invited authors and scholars to debate the issue of cultural authenticity with regard to multicultural children's literature. Many contributors argued that in order for a text to be culturally authentic the author has to come from or be part of

the cultural world they portray in the text, similar to Sims's original findings in 1982. The rationale for this argument is that the author needs to be a cultural insider in order for the readers to hear another perspective—a perspective that did not begin with a dominant groups. Therefore, an author who is a cultural insider will likely offer a perspective that disrupts the status quo of dominant groups' narratives of the "Other." This culturally authentic perspective is likely to offer appreciative and rich narratives of traditionally marginalized cultures. Fox and Short (2003) reviewed multiple perspectives on the debate and concluded that there is no single "right" answer. One contributor to this volume, Jacqueline Woodson, concluded with the following insight:

> We want the chance to tell our own stories, to tell them honestly and openly. We don't want publishers to say, "Well, we already published a book about that," and then find that it was a book that did not speak truth about us but rather told someone-on-the-outside's idea of who we are. My belief is that there is room in the world for all stories, and that everyone has one. My hope is that those who write about the fears and the laughter and the language in my grandmother's house have first sat down at the table with us and dipped the bread of their own experiences in our stew. (p. 45)

Woodson, an award-winning author who has published more than two dozen picture books and young adult novels, does not limit her writing to only portray the perspectives of African American girls or women in America. Rather, she has "sat down" at many tables, and she draws from the intersectionality of her life experiences as a person of color, a mother, a daughter, a sister, a child from the South who migrated to the North with a single mother, a bilingual person, and a lesbian. With Woodson as an example, we can conclude that each of us has unique stories to tell, because we all have our own ways of being in the world.

Sims-Bishop (1991) described the instructive potential of multicultural children's literature using three metaphors: mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors. According to

Sims-Bishop, books can serve as windows that allow the reader to enter a real or imagined, familiar or strange world. Books can also serve as mirrors that reflect the reader's own life and experiences in the pages. Finally, books also have the potential to serve as sliding glass doors that allow the reader to step into the world of the book and use it as both mirror and window simultaneously. Scholars and educators (e.g., McNair, 2016; Tschida, Ryan, & Ticknor, 2014) frequently draw on this metaphor when they advocate for multicultural children's literature in classrooms. For many scholars and educators, multicultural children's literature has the potential to open up worlds to children, as well as to serve as (possibly) the only space in public school where they can see their own reflections. Chris Myers (2014) extended this metaphor by adding that diverse literature can also serve as a map for children to see where they have been and where they hope to go.

In *Stories Matter* (2003), Fox and Short position multicultural children's literature as a pedagogical construct, a resource that literacy teachers often draw upon to support their work as critical educators:

> Multicultural literature is not a special unit or piece of literature, but a perspective that is part of all education… multicultural literature is a pedagogical construct that has the goal of challenging the existing canon by including literature from a variety of cultural groups. Debates about multicultural literature and cultural authenticity, therefore, are not so much about the nature of the literature itself, but about the function of literature in schools and in the lives of readers. If "multicultural literature" is a pedagogical term rather than a literary term, then the issues of cultural authenticity take on significance related to the role of literature in children's lives, specifically in the power of literature to change the world. (p. 8)

Many scholars, particularly scholars of color, affirm Fox and Short's account of multicultural children's literature as a pedagogical construct that has served as a necessary resource for enacting critical pedagogies in the past thirty years (e.g., Cai &

Bishop, 1994; Ching, 2005; Harris, 1990, 1991; Perini, 2002; Reese, 1996; Sims, 1982; Xie, 2000; Yoon et al., 2010). These scholars position multicultural children's literature as a pedagogical construct because it "challenges the canon" (Cai & Bishop, 1994, p. 69) and "supports diversity and raises consciousness on issues ignored in school" (Perini, 2002, p. 428).

For example, Xie's (2000) positioning of multicultural literature clarifies and extends the notion that a literary text can offer multiple perspectives. According to Xie, multicultural children's literature is a pedagogical construct that could enable today's children to be post-colonized. He argues that the text can confront hegemonic narratives by offering counterhegemonic negotiations: "By writing outside the syntax of imperialism, the violated and repressed others can force the world to confront their historical experience, and can prove their own intellectual, cultural, and moral excellence or equivalence" (p. 12). Xie advocates for a movement that embraces radical difference: "The marginalized others can turn tables on the dominant… [The Other] writes outside and threatens to subvert the rational, imperial order of discourse" (p. 9). The movement of radical difference should begin with children because they are the ones who are most violently subjected to colonialist discourses and narratives of racial and ethnic Otherness in the context of school. Xie concludes,

> If children's literature and the criticisms of children's literature take upon themselves to decolonize the world, they will prove the most effective postcolonial project in the long run, for the world ultimately belongs to children. If today's children grow up with postcolonial education, and if they are encouraged to understand and appreciate racial/ethnic difference, that would tremendously expedite the progress towards global post-coloniality. (p. 13)

Twenty-eight years after Sims (1982) published her foundational work, and scholars agreed that multicultural children's literature could make a difference in the lives of students, Yoon et al. (2010) analyzed twelve popular multicultural picture books to

understand the cultural perspectives promoted by the authors. The researchers organized the books into three categories: neutral/unclear, pluralistic, and assimilationist. Of these twelve books, six were identified as presenting culture in an unclear/neutral manner. In this category, the authors explained, "ideologies of assimilation and pluralism are unclearly or neutrally presented" (p. 112). They identified four books as assimilationist: "The messages contain the idea of assimilation into a dominant cultural norm and system" (p. 112). According to the authors, two themes emerged among books in the assimilationist category. First, the main character in these books moved from resisting their new culture to assimilation; second, these books portrayed America as the land of opportunity, promoting the narrative of immigrants pursuing the American dream. In their study, only two out of twelve books clearly promoted a pluralistic ideology according to the researchers' criteria. The small proportion of pluralistic multicultural books in this study speaks to the ongoing scarcity of authentic multicultural children's literature decades after Sims had first called attention to this problem in 1982.

Availability of Multicultural Children's Literature

In 2014, authors and scholars formed the grassroots organization, *We Need Diverse Books*, to address the lack of diverse "non-majority narratives in children's literature." This organization formed in response to the data that the Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) published each year on the number of children's books published that feature characters of color, as well as the number of authors from diverse backgrounds. For example, in 2015 the CCBC received 3,400 books. Of those books, approximately 3% were written by African American authors, and less than 8% were about African Americans; less than 2% were by Latino authors, and approximately 2% were about Latinos; less than 1% were by American Indians/First Nations, and approximately 1% were about American Indians/First Nations; 5% were by Asian

Pacific/Asian Pacific Americans, and approximately 3% were about Asian Pacific/Asian Pacific Americans.

Furthermore, in 2014, the late Walter Dean Myers and his son, Chris Myers, took up this issue in two powerful op-eds in *The New York Times.* These paired op-eds brought the scarcity of books by and about people of color to the nation's attention. As a result, *We Need Diverse Books* was created to mediate between the world of education, the world of authors, and the world of publishing for the purpose of insisting on more diverse books. *We Need Diverse Books* recognizes the importance of "all diverse experiences, including (but not limited to) LGBTQIA, Native people of color, gender diversity, people with disabilities, and ethnic, cultural, and religious minorities" (http://weneeddiversebooks.org/mission-statement/). They also express their mission as "putting more books featuring diverse characters into the hands of all children" and their vision as "a world in which all children can see themselves in the pages of a book."

Since this organization was founded, the United States has seen slight increases in authorship by, and texts about, people from diverse backgrounds. Each year, *We Need Diverse Books* holds a meeting to review their progress and set new goals at the NCTE annual conference. Because this is now a national movement that is being followed in national and international media outlets (and because student populations continue to grow increasingly diverse), it is likely that many more classroom teachers are being encouraged in professional development sessions to use multicultural children's literature. In other words, scholars, authors, and educators are talking and writing about the potential for multicultural children's literature to provide cultural representations (mirrors), promote intercultural awareness and appreciation (windows), and serve as maps for the sake of improving literacy—a resource that can serve to build equity for all learners by disrupting dominant narratives of the institution.

Summary

Since the publication of Sims's foundational work (1982), scholars and practitioners have voiced a growing recognition of the need for multicultural children's literature as a resource to lift the voices of marginalized students. Today, national literacy organizations continue to advocate for the use of multicultural children's literature, and the children's literature have also expressed a commitment to work to increase the number of authors of color and books featuring characters from diverse backgrounds. The understanding that multicultural children's literature can be used as a pedagogical resource that can support teachers towards culturally inclusive and critical pedagogies is on the rise (e.g., Fleming et. al., 2016; Fox & Short, 2003; McNair, 2016; Saldaña, 2012; Thomas, 2016; *We Need Diverse Books*, 2014).

Enacting Critical Pedagogies with Multicultural Children's Literature

In this section, I review the literature on teachers' enactment of critical pedagogies within discussions of multicultural children's literature. Wan (2006) proposes critical strategies that teachers might employ when sharing multicultural children's literature with their students. She writes:

Teachers not only need to be familiar with literature that provides cultural insights in the classroom, but also need to be able to present texts in meaningful, insightful ways. Such engagement goes beyond using a book as a reading assignment when followed by comprehension questions and answers or construction of predesigned multicultural activities. Framing the social-political contexts of a story by drawing on readers' prior knowledge, responding through one's own experiences, and providing information about the author's background and purpose are but three important strategies to enhance sharing

multicultural literature. It also helps when teachers experience personal connections themselves to realize the empowering nature of such literature. (p. 148)

Building from Wan's proposals, I review literature on literacy teachers' enactment of critical pedagogies. Scholars have conducted a wide range of inquiry in this area, examining topics including students' responses to multicultural children's literature (e.g., Athanases, 1998; Brooks, 2006; DeNicolo & Franquiz, 2006; Enciso, 1997; Evans, 2010) and teachers as facilitators of literature discussion with multicultural children's literature (e.g., Jordan & Santori; 2015; Kesler, 2011; Moje & Lewis, 2007; Wan, 2006; Wolk, 2004). Within this area, scholars have also examined the tensions that classroom teachers experience as they work to enact their critical pedagogies with multicultural children's literature and literature discussions. Findings indicate that teachers enact critical pedagogies at various levels of competence, ranging from superficial inclusion of isolated cultural ideas and events (e.g., Russell, McDonald, Jones, & Weaver, 2016) to the desired enactment of critical and transformative approaches to teaching and learning (e.g., Price-Dennis, Holmes, & Smith, 2016).

Students' Responses to Multicultural Children's Literature in School

Much of the research on the use of multicultural children's literature in classrooms focuses on students' responses to this literature, and by and large, researchers note the potential and possibility of the use of such literature with diverse youth. Studies that attend to students' responses indicate: a) multicultural children's literature gave students across elementary and secondary settings opportunities to access their cultural identity in school (e.g., Brooks, 2006; Sutherland, 2005); b) students wanted to engage in conversations in school about sociocultural issues and to resist the status quo (e.g., Copenhaver-Johnson, Bownan, & Johnson, 2007; DeNicolo & Franquiz, 2006; Enciso, 1997; Michael-Luna, 2008; Souto-Manning, 2009); and c) students moved past

stereotypes and learned to *see* beyond the classroom (e.g., Athanases, 1998; Price-Dennis et al., 2016). These scholars most often analyzed data from students' oral and written participation in literature discussions, and they concluded that the literature served as a conduit for students to address and speak back to critical sociocultural issues at both local and global levels.

In schools, teachers sometimes use the structure of reading and writing workshop to enact critical literacy pedagogy. For example, Seely Flint and Tropp Laman (2012) studied the enactment of critical literacy during a unit that two third-grade teachers developed to address social justice issues while teaching poetry. As part of their work, the teachers put together poetry text sets that showed the students examples of free verse poetry to demonstrate how poets incorporate important social issues into their writing. Many of these texts, across genres, were multicultural children's literature. The teachers also read aloud and engaged students in discussions with critical literacy texts "that invite readers to problematize and make visible socially significant issues in the communities and the world" (p. 14). After studying this multicultural literature, including poetry and critical literacy texts, the children composed their own poetry, which addressed who they were as complex cultural beings and spoke to local and global sociocultural issues.

Brooks (2006), Brooks et al. (2008), and Sutherland (2005) researched the use of culturally conscious literature as defined by Sims (1982) with adolescents in the context of the classroom and an after-school club. These studies found that textual features of culturally conscious literature prompted transactions that allowed these students to access their cultural identity in a school context. Students did not connect with the same textual features in the same way; however, there were features of the text that the majority of the students were able to relate to at some level. For example, in Sutherland's (2005) study with African American adolescent girls reading Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, there

were two primary features to which all the girls responded, both in discussions and in writing: 1) how a Eurocentric view of beauty acts as a boundary in Black women's lives and 2) how other's assumptions about who they are act as boundaries (p. 380). Brooks et al. (2008) also found that the African American adolescent girls in their study discussed issues of colorism, body image, status, and identity in response to Sharon Flake's text, *The Skin I'm In* (1998). The use of culturally conscious literature in these classrooms and after-school contexts enabled African American students to openly discuss their cultural identity, as well as larger macro-level issues of race, class, and gender.

Whereas Brooks (2006), Brooks et al. (2008), and Sutherland (2005) found that students bonded with each other when reading literature that represented them culturally, Michael-Luna (2008) observed students coming together to oppose a statement that they felt misrepresented them. She observed how a conversation about a multicultural children's book prompted bilingual Hispanic first-graders to construct racial identities. During this talk, the teacher compared his Latin@ students with the young Martin Luther King Jr., but the students rejected this comparison, asserting that they were all White. These young children felt that the teacher was racially constructing them, and they rejected this construction. This transaction with a short biographical text made the teacher aware that his first-graders were looking for representations of their own cultural and ethnic identities in school, rather than feeling (mis)placed on the White-Black racial binary. In response to their resistance of a Black identity, the teacher developed a culturally relevant curriculum for his students, focusing on themes of pride, community, and Latin@ culture. These studies help us realize that children can choose to embrace or resist the sociocultural identities that are offered in multicultural children's literature (and, at times, imposed upon them by their teachers).

According to research focused on elementary-level education (e.g., Copenhaver-Johnson, Bowman, & Johnson, 2007; DeNicolo & Franquiz 2006; Enciso, 1997; Souto-Manning, 2009), young children are also willing to engage in critical conversations about cultural differences. DeNicolo & Franquiz (2006) and Enciso (1997) concluded that elementary-age children would pursue critical discussion when they had critical encounters with texts. "Critical encounters emerge when a word, concept, or event in a story surprises, shocks, or frightens the reader or readers to such a degree that they seek to inquire further about vocabulary or events selected by the author" (DeNicolo & Franquiz, 2006, p. 157). Studies that focused on students' responses to multicultural texts found that when children encountered personal issues like race, culture, and ethnicity in texts, they seemed to pay attention to the text's relation to sociocultural issues and realities which were beyond the text, rather than only focusing on the story or the characteristics of the text (DeNicolo & Franquiz, 2006; Enciso, 1997; Michael-Luna, 2008; Souto-Manning, 2009; Sutherland, 2005). These critical encounters may cause disequilibrium for the teacher because they are "moments not rehearsed," and teachers may choose to disengage from the discussion with the students (Copenhaver-Johnson, Bowman, & Johnson, 2007). However, some findings indicated that students would take up these conversations with each other, even without direct guidance from the teacher (DeNicolo & Franquiz 2006; Enciso, 1997; Souto-Manning, 2009).

Studies also found that students moved past stereotypes and learned to *see* beyond the classroom when given the opportunity to engage meaningfully with multicultural children's literature (e.g., Athanases, 1998; Price-Dennis et al., 2016). For example, tenth-grade students in Athanases's (1998) study openly discussed issues of culture and identity in school in response to diverse literature, per their teachers' invitations, and within these discussions they constructed meaning together:

> Students gained comfort in sharing personal and community stories paralleling those in the literature, creating a fund of stories thematically connected to those in the studied texts. The teachers encouraged students to explore race issues openly, to bring personal and community knowledge to bear on works, and to make intertextual links. (p. 281)

The students reflected on personal issues and concerns with the text, experienced discomfort with issues of racism, voiced their dislike for literature "they cannot embrace or that does not embrace them," and resisted stereotypical notions of the "Other." Although we know that the teachers in this study played a significant role in making space for these experiences with multicultural children's literature, Athanases's findings focus strictly on the students' responses, rather than the teachers' strategies for facilitating this discourse with their students.

Almost twenty years after Athanases's study, Price-Dennis et al.'s (2016) study, titled "I Thought We Were Over This Problem," focused on the collaborative work of a teacher and two teacher educators as they designed a critical inquiry unit on race using multicultural children's literature and digital tools. With these shared resources, the students engaged in discussions. The classroom teacher, much like the teachers in Athanases's study (1998), had autonomy and consistently reflected on their practice. As a result of the interactions between resources, students, teacher, and teacher educators, the researchers witnessed a shift in the students' discourse as they learned to question and "see" beyond the classroom. The multicultural children's literature paired with digital tools enabled the students to inquire into issues of race and racism beyond the local context of their community to the global context. The scholarship presented in this section indicates that when teachers give students the opportunity to work together to discuss multicultural children's literature for the purpose of addressing critical

sociocultural issues at home and in society, they are likely to take it up and think critically about the ways race, class, gender, and power are at work.

In addition, since much of the research in this area examines responses among students of color, there is little research on how White students respond to multicultural literature, which can serve as a "window" for them (in Bishop's terms). According to proponents of the critical frameworks that I outline in Chapter Two, critical pedagogies are intended to benefit *all* students, yet we currently have little information on how White students engage in critical conversations about inequity, marginalization, and power. The few studies that exist concluded that White students were generally less comfortable discussing race and were reluctant to recognize the reality of racial inequity (e.g. Flynn, 2012; Glazier & Seo, 2005; Newell, 2017). Newell's (2017) work outlines the intentional and purposeful work that teachers could do to support their White students to understand the reality of racism as a systemic form of oppression. According to Newell, in most cases these students had almost no exposure to people of color, and "This creates a closed feedback loop in which the members of that dominant group do not simply reject minority perspectives—many do not even realize an alternate experience exists" (p. 96). Furthermore, Flynn (2012) found that White secondary students had a harder time discussing race in school than their peers of color. According to Flynn (2012), White people tend to avoid discussing race and racism in any context, and as a result, White students did not have the language to enter the conversation and often did not know how to express their own feelings. In the next section, I look closely at research that focuses on the teacher's role in facilitating literature discussions with their students.

The Teacher as Facilitator of Literature Discussions

As scholars have demonstrated, critical pedagogies are dynamic in nature. It is not possible to enact any critical pedagogical framework in a linear or systematic manner

because the nature of critical sociocultural issues and power relations is to remain in constant flux. Therefore, critical pedagogy content does not work in a standardized fashion, and teachers and students will never achieve mastery of these approaches; rather, they are always engaged in a process of becoming (Freire, 1970/). In this study, I use the term dynamic (Freire, 1970/2000; Kumashiro, 2001) to describe pedagogical approaches based on this recognition that teachers' development of critical sociocultural knowledge is always partial and unfinished.

Teachers often take up sociocultural issues with their students in dynamic ways during literature discussions. Literature discussion is defined as "text-based shared inquiry of the listening-and-talking kind. A group of inquirers is presented with a well-chosen text (document, issue, etc.), a focusing question, and a purpose" (Parker & Hess, 2001, p. 275). According to Cole (2003), the teacher is the key person in school who can teach students how to "orally converse on a given topic" (p. xiii). Cole explains why teachers should support their students through talking as an approach to meaning making:

> We [teachers] should because talking helps clarify and organize their [students'] thoughts. We should because it helps them solve problems, revise their thinking, and connect to other situations, people, and events, but also because children learn how to belong and get along… By developing these classroom structures for talk, teachers can help students collaborate, substantiate their ideas, and negotiate. (pp. xiii-xiv)

According to Cole, the benefits of students' talking to each other are multifaceted. Although Cole's explanation above is not focused on developing critical sociocultural knowledge, we can infer that by centering the students' conversations during interactive read aloud, these three teachers enabled students to "collaborate, substantiate their ideas, and negotiate" for the purpose of exploring critical sociocultural issues.

Research on literature discussion more broadly suggests that the teacher plays a key role (e.g., Beck & McKeown, 2001; Brashears, 2012; Maloch, 2005; Morgan &

York, 2009; Parker & Hess, 2001). Ideally, literature discussions serve as "open forums [that] are in fact open" (p. 287), and we should not assume that teachers are able to lead such discussions simply because they have participated in successful literature discussions. In order for students to engage in discussions in ways that enable them to explore issues, deepen understandings, and draw conclusions, the teacher must know how to facilitate literature discussions that are authentic and equitable.

I discovered only a handful of studies (Copenhaver-Johnson, 2006; Jordan & Santori; 2015; Kesler, 2011; Moje & Lewis, 2007; Wolk, 2004) that directly addressed the complexity of the teacher's role in this specific context of literature discussions with multicultural children's literature; my study responds to the evident need for further research in this area. These studies focus on the teacher and the students working together during literature discussions on critical issues in the classroom context. For example, Wolk (2004) co-taught with the classroom teacher, Jenny, in a sixth-grade urban classroom for several months of a school year. In this classroom, Wolk and Jenny turned to multicultural picture books to directly discuss issues of racism, prejudice, discrimination, and stereotypes. Their goal was to revise the "simplistic vision of democracy... a citizenry schooled to be spectators" and encourage teachers to "take the initiative and turn classrooms into dynamic spaces that ring with the eloquent voices of people striving to make a better world" (p. 34). Although Wolk recognized the potential of picture books to facilitate this talk, he had to acknowledge the complexity of the teacher's role in bringing forward "good talk." He wrote,

> During a 30-minute discussion, a teacher can make dozens of decisions from who to call on, to what to say and ask, to when to redirect the conversation. No matter how "child-centered" we may want our classrooms to be, the teacher may need to be explicit in bringing up important democratic issues for debate and study and in helping students connect these ideas to their everyday lives. Teaching for democracy will not happen by magic; teachers make it happen. (p. 27)

In the classroom, Wolk met with about a dozen kids at a time to share and discuss picture books for the primary purpose of discussing sociocultural issues, specifically issues of race. In this study, Wolk presented multiple transcripts to depict the variety of responses students had to the topics he introduced in the discussion in response to the texts. Although Wolk provided the reader with glimpses into his rationale for selecting certain picture books, his guiding questions in discussion, and examples of students' responses, but he did not offer a detailed methodology of his work in Jenny's classroom. The purpose of his article was to argue that picture books can support teachers as they bring up issues of democracy, social justice, caring/empathy/compassion, social imagination, nonviolence, etc., and that students and teachers can engage in these discussions in meaningful ways in school. Therefore, although the reader understands that the work of the teacher is complex, Wolk's work does not specify exactly how teachers can best prepare for this work with students.

Kesler (2011) shared Wolk's (2004) recognition that teachers are ultimately responsible to "bring this level of critical awareness to the curriculum and guide their students to perceive the ideologies inherent in texts" (Kesler, 2011, p. 421). Kesler studied his own practice as an elementary teacher and a teacher educator and reflected on the process that was required of him to apply the tenets of culturally responsive pedagogy in the classroom:

> I had to recognize the inherent ideologies of the texts and how they subsequently positioned readers. I had to relinquish control and enter uncharted waters in the unfolding curriculum. I had to accept reformulations and counter texts to the texts that I provided. I had to allow conflict and unresolved issues that challenged the difficult and unexamined topics. (p. 427)

Kesler aimed to disrupt his own imposition of texts onto the students and their families, and instead centered the families' stories through texts created by the students (e.g.,

students' family trees) in order to address the issues that mattered to them. The teachers, according to Kesler, should accommodate, offer solutions, and bridge the school context with the community.

Based on the work of Wolk (2004) and Kesler (2011), it is clear that the presence and use of multicultural children's literature is not enough on its own; in order for a transformative result, a committed and capable teacher is essential (Wan, 2006). In the previous section of this literature review, focused on students' responses, scholars concluded that students responded critically to the literature because the literacy teacher made space and invited talk; however, they did not focus on the moves or talk through which teachers facilitated these literature discussions. As these two studies imply, the teacher needs to be well-prepared at the onset of instruction—ready to facilitate, guide, and redirect in the moment-to-moment interactions between students, teacher, and texts.

A teacher's preparation for the moment-to-moment interactions can feel almost impossible for the reasons Kesler (2011) listed in his study, but the teacher is not alone in this context. Rather, the teacher is working to make meaning together with the students. The teacher and the students engage in a continuous process of negotiation during literature discussions (Copenhaver-Johnson, 2006). Moje and Lewis (2007) analyzed transcripts of classroom discussions on multicultural children's literature and concluded that the teacher's and students' identities were made and remade in this context. Both the teacher and students enacted agency in the discussion as they took up issues, but due to the power that the teacher holds in these settings, the researchers also observed that learning was at times constrained for the students when they resisted the teacher's conclusions regarding such social issues as gang life. The students' took the opportunity to address some of the positive aspects of gang life, and the teacher at times shut their talk and ideas down as wrong; thereby, silencing her students' ideas and perspectives.

Moje and Lewis analyzed a single literature discussion focused on the text *The Outsiders* (Hinton, 1967); although they highlight the teacher's and students' interactions, it was unclear how the teacher's work evolved over time as a result of discussions like this one.

Jordan and Santori (2015) examined the roles that teachers and third-grade students played in dialogic events such as whole group and small group literature discussions. In one classroom, the teacher and a small group of students engaged in weekly discussions on folktales and fables from October through May; in the second class, the teacher and the students engaged in daily whole group literature discussions on current events from newspapers. The whole group discussions in this classroom were student-led, with the teacher in a supportive role. Much like my study, their research took place in the context of literacy instruction, where there existed a constant tension between structure and freedom during literature discussions. The findings indicated that the teacher and the students were "interdependent co-participants who collaboratively construct meaning as they improvise during text-based discussions" and that "students as well as the teacher improvise because the 'piece' being created is a joint product... the outcome cannot be predicted in advance because it is collectively determined by all participants" (p. 226, 229). However, the researchers concluded that the predictable structure of literature discussion established in the two classrooms made space for creativity and improvisation during the discussion.

An additional structure that the teachers in this study incorporated regularly during the whole group discussions was turn and talk. In turn and talk, teachers asked students to talk to each other about an issue or question during a whole group lesson. Practitioners (e.g., Cole, 2003; Miller, 2002/2012) and scholars (e.g., Fisher, Brozo, Frey, & Ivey, 2015; Hammond, 2017) agree that these student-to-student interactions increase students' comprehension. Turn and talk involves the students in the thinking process and

promotes retention of critical information (Kordaki & Siempos, 2009). Advantages of such a structure include increasing students' motivation and engagement through personal interaction, as well as encouraging participation by students who are generally reluctant to participate (Kordaki & Siempos, 2009). In addition, turn and talk is often suggested as a good way to informally assess students' comprehension (e.g., Cole, 2003; Miller, 2002/2012).

Summary

As this section of the literature review demonstrates, there are multiple studies that center on teachers' use of multicultural children's literature and literature discussions for the purpose of enacting critical pedagogies by making space for critical conversations with students. It is evident from the scholarship that students and teachers can successfully engage in literature discussions about multicultural children's literature for the purpose of developing cultural competence and critical consciousness, despite the challenges that teachers have to juggle in the moment-to-moment interactions due to the dynamic nature of the practice. However, there are few studies that help us understand how teachers navigate and facilitate these discussions; furthermore, it is unclear how literacy teachers sustain and grow their enactment of critical pedagogies within and across these dialogic events over the long term. In addition, these studies devote relatively little attention to the question of how teachers navigate the contradictory demands of critical pedagogies and neoliberal school policies.

Conclusion and Need for Study

The literature reviewed across this chapter indicates that literacy teachers often find it challenging to enact critical pedagogies for reasons including the following: 1) the consequences of cultural mismatch between the teacher and students; 2) limited

professional support in the context of school for critical educators; and 3) the inherently dynamic nature of critical pedagogies, critical sociocultural knowledge, and literature discussions. Based on the research presented in this review, it is evident that teachers who are committed to critical approaches to education could benefit from ongoing professional development that is designed to inspire and sustain ongoing exploration of the dynamic nature of their school and classroom contexts. However, I have also learned from the literature and my own 17 years of experience as a classroom teacher that many inservice teachers do not have access to sustained professional development, such as the learning opportunities provided by Lewis and Ketter (2008) or Seely Flint and Tropp Laman (2012). Therefore, teachers and students are often left to work through the tensions and challenges of enacting critical pedagogies on their own. Freire (1970/2004) believed,

> Attempting to liberate the oppressed without their reflective participation in the act of liberation is to treat them as objects which must be saved from a burning building; it is to lead them into the populist pitfall and transform them into the masses which can be manipulated. (p. 65)

I believe that this rings true for the liberation of both teachers and students; one cannot liberate another unless they themselves are in the process of becoming liberated. Therefore, based on my review of the literature, I believe that the enactment of critical pedagogies involves a process that is naturally shared between the teacher and the students.

The purpose of this study was to inquire into the under-examined space of elementary literacy teachers' enactment of critical pedagogies as they examined critical sociocultural issues during and around classroom discussions of multicultural children's literature. Many teachers have received some form of support, required or voluntary, outside of the classroom context with adult colleagues, but there is limited research on

the specific practices through which teachers enact critical pedagogies in discussions of multicultural literature, as well as the ways in which teachers sustain and grow their enactment of critical pedagogies over time. My dissertation sought to explore the divide between theory and practice. Based on my literature review, it was evident that many educators agree about the tenets or criteria of critical pedagogies that ought to guide their teaching. However, the research on how to enact these principles in classroom settings remains complicated and inconclusive, and my study's aim was to identify specific approaches and strategies that elementary literacy teachers use to enact critical pedagogies with this much advocated tool of multicultural children's literature. To address gaps in the literature, I observed three teachers over the course of an academic year, focusing on how they enacted critical pedagogies through interactive read aloud discussions of multicultural literature. In the next chapter, Chapter Three, I will report on my methodological approaches for this project.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In this study, I employed qualitative, multi-case study methods (Dyson & Genishi, 2005; Merriam, 2002; Stake, 1995; Stake, 2006). The study took place in three classroom contexts, each one serving as a bounded case (Merriam, 2002). My approach was informed by Stake's work on case study methods.

Stake (1995) defines a case as "a specific, a complex, functioning thing," more specifically "an integrated system" which "has a boundary and working parts" and is purposive (in social sciences and human services) (p. 2). Stake defines a case study as a "holistic" (giving special attention to mutual links between the phenomenon and its contexts), "empirical" (based on observation), "interpretive" (researchers' intuition), "empathic" (using an emic perspective to reflect on how people think), and integrated method that values the different standpoints and interpretations researcher and participants have. Stake also considers that researchers should be willing to put aside as many presumptions as possible to explore the participants' lives and cultures. Dyson and Genishi (2005) add to Stake's (1995) description of case study by pointing out the "messy complexity of human experience" (Dyson & Genishi, 2005, p. 3) that makes up the case or phenomenon that the researcher sets out to study. They argue that case study allows the researcher to "gain insight into some of the factors that shape, and the processes through which people interpret or make meaningful" (p. 3) a particular context.

The acknowledgement of the messiness of this work aligns with my theoretical understanding that the stories I tell across these cases will be both partial and political (Kumashiro, 2001). The purpose of this study was to better understand the literacy teachers' journeys with enacting critical pedagogies using multicultural children's literature. Moreover, the ultimate goal of this study was not simply to *understand*

teachers' enactment of critical pedagogies, but also to inform curricular and instructional efforts aimed at promoting critical pedagogies that are *transformative*.

According to Stake (2006), the multi-case study invites diversity to the project because the researcher is studying a variety of contexts that then make up the whole, or the quintain. I analyzed each case individually first, and then I analyzed the data (e.g., interviews, read aloud video recordings, transcripts) across the cases. Based on my analysis, I made the decision to generally report my findings across cases for this dissertation. Stake (2006) writes,

> Usually it will be important to seek out and present multiple perspectives on activities and issues, discovering and portraying the different views. Seldom will it be necessary to resolve contradictory testimony or competing values. Even contradictions may help us understand the quintain. (p. 8)

Each classroom teacher, based on her style, her experience, her philosophies, and her interpretation of critical pedagogies, approached this work in her own unique manner, even though three teachers were teaching with similar resources and within a particular structure of interactive read aloud during reader's workshop. The multi-case study approach allowed me to study the broad context of the three classrooms, and I drew on constant comparative (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and microethnographic (Erickson, 2004) methods of analysis.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

I report on the following research questions:

1. How do elementary teachers sustain and grow their enactment of critical pedagogies?
2. How do elementary literacy teachers address critical sociocultural knowledge and issues of inequity?

3. How do teachers who practice critical pedagogies navigate the critical encounters that arise when they discuss multicultural children's literature?

CONTEXT FOR RESEARCH

Below, I describe the setting for my study, the participants involved, and the methods of data collection and analysis, before discussing related methodological concerns and limitations.

Definitions of the Classroom Structures

All three of the classrooms in my study could be described as literature-based classrooms, in that the three teachers each selected literature for use as their primary teaching tool, offered their students access to a variety of authentic texts (Allington, 2000; Fountas & Pinnell, 2006; Miller, 2002/2012), and emphasized meaningful reading and writing activities (independently and in groups) instead of using traditional skills-based instruction with worksheets (Allington, 2000; Routman, 1991). Rather than following a script from a basal textbook with prescribed reading, these teachers employed "authentic literature as a vehicle to teach skills strategically" (Routman, 1991, p.135) and provide pleasurable reading experiences. The practices in literature-based classrooms promote conversation—both between the teacher and the students, and between students—which has been shown to increase vocabulary development, strengthen language structure, and develop critical readers and writers (McGinley & Kamberelis, 1996; Morrow, 1992).

These three teachers all used the structure of interactive read-aloud, which involves discussing texts with students before, during, and after reading them aloud (Fisher, Flood, Lapp, & Frey, 2004). To encourage students' active participation, these teachers asked questions that elicited both aesthetic and efferent responses (Rosenblatt,

1982). As recommended by Barrentine (1996), the teachers remained flexible with their plans because the primary goal of the read-aloud is to be responsive to students. Teachers play a key role in facilitating effective literature discussions (e.g., Beck & McKeown, 2001; Brashears, 2012; Maloch, 2005; Morgan & York, 2009; Parker & Hess, 2001). Maloch and Bomer (2012) note that discussions can "relegate students to passive roles" (p. 131); to prevent this, teachers should develop an interactive and decentralized format in which the teacher and students "share the conversational floor" as active participants (p. 131), rather than the traditional initiation-response-evaluation (IRE) structure. For the purpose of this study, I focused specifically on interactive read alouds and literature discussions about multicultural children's literature.

Descriptions of Schools and Teachers

This research took place in three elementary classrooms in three different independent school districts in Central Texas. I was not looking for one particular context of school or students, but rather a variety of contexts. I invited teachers who had established literature-based classrooms and were committed to the practice of reading aloud and discussing multicultural children's literature with their students regularly as a method of enacting critical pedagogy. My own stance on critical pedagogy is that all students, from all backgrounds, can benefit from engaging with the tenets of this diverse and complex body of thought. Furthermore, much of the research in this area, as I indicated in Chapter Two, focuses on either preparing teachers to work with students of color or on students of color's responses to multicultural literature, particularly in urban settings. Since my study sought to address the relative lack of scholarship on teachers and White students, I chose not to narrow my student participant sample to strictly students of color or students from diverse backgrounds based on culture, religion, class, gender, etc.

My criteria for inviting a teacher to participate in the study included:

- The teacher was an elementary literacy teacher.
- The teacher identified as a critical educator, culturally relevant teacher, or social justice teacher.
- The teacher's classroom was a literature-based classroom (as defined in the opening of this chapter).
- The teacher conducted daily interactive read alouds and whole group literature discussions of multicultural children's literature.
- The teacher volunteered to participate in the research.

The teacher participants, Ms. Jenna Smith, Ms. Natalia Barker, and Ms. Yolanda Martinez (pseudonyms used throughout) were all affiliated with the University as either graduates from the College of Education, as Cooperating Teachers to the University's Preservice Teachers, or both. Although these three teachers shared similar approaches to literacy instruction and had some similar teacher education experiences, they differed in terms of their classroom contexts and teaching experiences. These differences enabled me to consider variations as well as commonalities in the ways these teachers enacted and sustained critical pedagogies. Here, I share descriptions of the three school contexts, as well as the teachers' biographies based on conversations and observation I had with the teachers. I asked each teacher to share her teaching biography and philosophy to help me understand how they see themselves as critical educators.

Ms. Jenna Smith, 3rd grade ESL, Coyote Elementary. Coyote Elementary was a local public school. It opened in 1999 and served approximately 800 students in grades PK-5. The school's mission statement focused on nurturing and inspiring children. This campus included a curriculum on social and emotional learning. The student demographics were about 5% African American, 40% Hispanic, 40% White, 0.4% American Indian, 5% Asian, 0% Pacific Islander, and 5% two or more races.

Approximately 30% of the population was identified as economically disadvantaged, 10 % as English Language Learners, and 10% as Special Education. The school did very well on the 2016 STAAR, with passing rates above 90% in reading, math, and science, and above 80% in writing. Due to the students' high passing rates on the state's standardized test, Coyote Elementary School was not identified as a campus that required district intervention, and as a result, the administration and teachers had fewer mandates required of them by the district's administration. The school's principal was a finalist for the district's Principal of the Year award.

Ms. Smith had taught elementary grade levels in the local ISD since 1997. She earned her National Board Certification in 2003 and renewed her certification in 2012. Ms. Smith believed that teachers should be lifelong learners. Ms. Smith, a White teacher, shared many pivotal experiences that had shaped her identity as a critical educator. For example, in her family, growing up, she explained that her parents were both activists, and she had participated in activism for equality in terms of gender and race even as a child. However, Ms. Smith shared that her parents believed that in order to be racially just they right thing to do was adopt a color-blind stance. Therefore, for many years as a teacher, Ms. Smith built her curriculum around color-blind principles in pursuit of equality of experiences for all of her students. However, about six years ago, with the murder of Trayvon Martin, the birth of the Black Lives Matter movement, and the release of the movie *Selma* (2014), Ms. Smith was moved to open her eyes to the continued oppression and violence enacted on Black bodies in America today, and it was at the intersection of these events that Ms. Smith confronted her own race, gender, and privilege. With these events, which bridged the narrative arc of the past to the present, Ms. Smith refuted her family's stance of color-blind to racial awareness.

Ms. Smith always reminded herself that Whiteness in America included power and privilege, even in the "neutral" context of public school. At the time of the study, Ms. Smith was team-teaching with a first year teacher, Ms. Reynolds, and serving as her mentor. Ms. Reynolds was the only African-American teacher at Coyote Elementary at the time, and as the year progressed, the administration and the parents voiced concerns about Ms. Reynolds that Ms. Smith believed to be racially motivated. Ms. Smith was committed to supporting Ms. Reynolds through the various encounters that she had to face during her first year at the school, and I learned from Ms. Reynolds that Ms. Smith intervened on her behalf a number of times with both parents and administrators. During our interviews, Ms. Smith would express her frustration and disappointment regarding Ms. Reynolds's experience, without ever going into details or disclosing any sensitive information. From Ms. Smith's perspective, there were injustices happening to Ms. Reynolds at the school. Ms. Reynolds voiced gratitude for Ms. Smith's support during this first year.

Each year, Ms. Smith sought out new ways to challenge herself and improve her teaching practice. As a teacher, Ms. Smith was very committed to her students. She expressed appreciation for her families and students at all times, and she stated that it was her responsibility to figure out ways to support all of her students in having successful experiences in school. Ms. Smith read aloud to her students multiple times during the day. In addition to teaching literacy, math, and science, Ms. Smith identified as a social justice educator who introduced students to other cultures, issues of injustice, and people who worked for change in their communities—what she called "up-standers."

Ms. Smith believed in having important discussions with her students about differences, fairness, equity, justice, and social change because "these conversations will help them identify issues of injustice in their own lives and empower them to take action

in peaceful, meaningful ways." I observed her interactive read alouds that took place during her reading workshops; however, I learned that she also read aloud chapter books at the end of each day, as well as poetry throughout the day. Ms. Smith tried to read aloud multicultural or diverse chapter books such as *Inside Out and Back Again* by Thanna Lai (2011), about immigration during the Vietnam War, and *Zane and the Hurricane* by Rodman Philbrick (2014), about a 12-year-old boy's experience in New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina. These afternoon readings provided another space for students to discuss sociocultural topics.

At the time of this study, Ms. Smith had just started the Master's program in Mentoring, Leadership, and Professional Development at a local research university in the city where she taught and lived. According to Ms. Smith, she enrolled in graduate school primarily to deepen her own critical sociocultural knowledge, as well as to learn how to support other teachers in developing critical approaches to their work. She looked forward to moving into a district-level leadership role for the purpose of supporting the district's development of critical pedagogical pursuits. Ms. Smith often described her experiences in the Master's program, and she expressed her excitement about meeting more like-minded colleagues as a result of this new experience. However, at the same time, Ms. Smith, as a critical educator, naturally questioned the curriculum of the courses she was enrolled in—and she often wondered with me about the way power worked in her graduate program. She found herself wanting more of a critical perspective from the faculty members, and she felt that Whiteness was not named enough by the faculty or the assigned readings as a cause for the systemic inequities that occurred in public school. In some ways, Ms. Smith yearned for more naming of oppression from her faculty and peers, and this yearning for more fueled her own critical readings of this new context of graduate school—offering another context to consider power hierarchies and oppression.

Ms. Smith followed a number of scholars of color from the University on Twitter, and she sought out opportunities to learn from them throughout her graduate school experience. Ms. Smith acknowledged the Whiteness of the faculty in her program, and she independently pursued a culturally relevant trajectory by pursuing diverse perspectives.

Ms. Natalia Barker, 4th grade ESL, Village Elementary. There were nearly 800 students enrolled at Village Elementary School. Nearly 50% of the students identified as White, 25% identified as Hispanic/Latin@, and the remaining 25% identified as Asian. Approximately 23 native languages were represented on the campus. According to the Campus Improvement Plan, many students travelled with their families to their home countries during the school year. Roughly 10% of the campus was identified as economically disadvantaged; 10% of the population was identified as English Language Learners; and 10% qualified for some type of special education services. According to the Campus Improvement Plan, Village Elementary School earned a performance distinction for Student Progress and showed strong gains on all 4 indicators in the state accountability system. Student achievement on the state standardized test rose significantly the previous year in all areas except writing. Similar to Coyote Elementary, due to the students' high scores on the annual state standardized assessment, the administrators and teachers at Village Elementary School had more freedom to foster their school community and develop their school's learning initiatives.

Ms. Barker identified as bi-racial. Her mother was Persian, an immigrant from Iran, and Ms. Barker identified her father as White. She often mentioned her Persian heritage, and she was very open about it with her students. Ms. Barker also expressed the challenges she experienced at times when people around her would make racist and defamatory remarks about people from the Middle East because they assumed she was

White. Ms. Barker shared stories from her childhood with me during our year together, and I learned that she had lived abroad in Singapore for much of her elementary life. Therefore, in addition to her Irani roots, she expressed her strong connections with Southeast Asian culture. Ms. Barker shared that during her childhood, her mother relied on her and her sister to support her with communicating in English and translating documents from school and society. Ms. Barker reported that her identity as a Persian woman and her childhood abroad strongly influenced her pedagogy towards social justice and global perspectives. Ms. Barker identified teaching as her form of activism in the world.

After graduating from the Reading Specialization program at the local University in the spring of 2005, Ms. Barker began her teaching career the following fall. She taught fourth grade for two years, and then team-taught in a second/third grade multi-age class, as well as a third/fourth grade multiage classroom for eight years. She had taught at Village Elementary School for the last two years, and this past year was her first year to be departmentalized and solely teach language arts. Teaching reading and writing was Ms. Barker's passion, and she incorporated social-emotional learning as well as social justice themes into her units of study. She had a student-centered approach to instruction, where students learned to interact with text and each other through inquiry, book clubs, and interactive read aloud. During interactive read alouds, Ms. Barker expressed her commitment to introducing multiple genres to her students across the year, and she used this structure to read aloud shorter texts (e.g., picture books and newspaper articles) and longer texts (e.g., chapters books). Ms. Barker expressed her love for learning with her students, and her goal was to create a community in the classroom where students were reflective, thoughtful, and grow as confident, life-long learners.

Ms. Yolanda Martinez, 1st grade Dual Language, Los Diamantes Elementary. Los Diamantes Elementary School was one of six elementary schools in the district. Approximately 83% of the students enrolled are identified as Hispanic, 15% White, and 1.5% African American, and 0.5% Asian and Biracial. The district outlined five core commitments on its home webpage: student performance, academic rigor, culture, elimination of achievement gaps, and community. Los Diamantes Elementary School had earned a "Met Standard" accountability rating from the Texas Education Agency in 2017 and 2018.

At the start of this project, the district was about to launch its new two-way dual language format for bilingual instruction. Ms. Martinez was one of two dual language teachers in first grade, and the administration was determined to keep those two class sizes smaller than the other first grade sections. Ms. Martinez had ten students enrolled in her class during the 2017-2018 academic year, and her colleagues, the ESL teachers, had 18-22 students per class. Ms. Martinez had served as a bilingual teacher and an ESL teacher, but dual language was also a new context for her. Although it was helpful to have a smaller class, Ms. Martinez received materials and professional development support after the school year started, so she expressed feeling unprepared at the start of the year in terms of knowing what curricular resources to pull for this new method of instruction. Ms. Martinez also read aloud to her students multiple times during the day. Due to the implementation of the dual language model, Ms. Martinez conducted one interactive read aloud in the morning in Spanish and one in English in the afternoon. Despite the mandates on language in the dual language model (e.g., 70% Spanish instruction and 30% English instruction), Ms. Martinez never restricted her students' language; she welcomed them to speak to her and each other in the language of their choice, and she responded accordingly. Since I am not a fluent Spanish speaker, we

agreed it would be best for me to attend the afternoon read aloud. Ms. Martinez informed me that the district was also providing informational meetings for the parents in order to inform them about dual language instruction in school, as well as offer ideas to parents on how they can support their children at home with Spanish/English immersion.

Ms. Martinez was in her 21st year as a classroom teacher. She had worked in her current district for nearly a decade and in a neighboring district for over a decade. Ms. Martinez described her early classroom teaching experiences as fraught with tensions between herself and her administrators. She felt community with many of the teachers with whom she had worked in the past, and she shared repeatedly during our time together that she believed education was the key for change for the students and families she served. Ms. Martinez would often articulate that with education, the cycle of poverty and oppression can be broken, and this was a message she shared even with her young first-graders.

Ms. Martinez recalled her own schooling experiences as both liberating and oppressive. She remembered school as a place where she loved to learn and engage in new ideas, but she also remembered painful experiences of racism in response to her identity as a bilingual Latina. Ms. Martinez stated that her language was silenced and that she always (even now) had to navigate stereotypes about Mexicans and Mexican culture (e.g., "Oh, you know Mexicans are so lazy. They don't want to learn. They just want to have kids"). A significant and proud moment in Ms. Martinez's life was earning her undergraduate degree from a flagship university in the Southwest region of the United States. She was the first in her family to go to college, and Ms. Martinez wanted all of her students to at least consider the possibility of pursuing higher education. Ms. Martinez intentionally sought teaching opportunities where she was working with Latinx

communities, supporting families and children to find ways to lift themselves up with and through education.

Teacher participants as cooperating teachers. All three teachers worked in districts relatively close to this flagship university and to other local universities that have robust teacher education programs. For many years, Ms. Smith, Ms. Barker, and Ms. Martinez had maintained a connection to higher education spaces during their tenure as in-service teachers. For example, all three teachers served as cooperating teachers for preservice teachers enrolled in one of the local universities. They opened up their classrooms as observation classrooms for pre-service teachers and university faculty to come and visit, or even work with their students, as part of the field experiences for various university Methods courses. Ms. Barker, Ms. Martinez, and Ms. Smith offered up their time, guidance, and classrooms to numerous preservice teachers in the last decade. Although these teachers are often assigned a single student intern for the span of a semester or academic year, the teachers during the time of this project were working with preservice teachers in a variety of settings per the universities' requests, including being assigned a single preservice teacher.

Researcher Positionality

I approach my work as a critical researcher. Morrell (2004) describes critical researchers as those who "often regard their work as a first step toward forms of political action that can redress the injustices found in the field site or constructed in the very act of research itself" (p. 24). To explain my desire, need, outlook, and role in this study, I begin with my own experience as a Muslim girl and a woman of color growing up and living in America.

Although I was born and raised in the United States, I have always felt like an outsider. In one of my most vivid early memories of school, I was running late to an

assembly, and when I sat down, the boy next to me turned and asked, "How did you get to be that color? Did you roll around in the dirt?" Until fourth grade, I was mocked and bullied for my brown skin, my braids, my parents' accents, my lunch, my religion, my bilingualism, and my name. Teachers allowed, and sometimes encouraged, my classmates to humiliate me. As a child, I experienced the wounding of White people's prejudices against dark-skinned immigrants.

Ms. Fields, my fourth-grade teacher, broke the cycle of violence. Observing that the bullying was racialized, she showed the class a photograph in a fashion magazine of a model of color and said, "Look how beautiful she is! Saba, one day you're going to be a model in a magazine." While it may be atypical to consider a fashion magazine a critical or culturally relevant text, Ms. Fields read it as one, and by extension, invited my White peers to read it as one too. She recognized and celebrated my difference with a text and read it as something to be celebrated. In doing so, she helped me recognize myself beyond what Whiteness and its actors would have me believe was inferior. Ms. Fields, in her act of authentic care, made space for me to become, to make friends, and to exist in my difference. The most important lesson she taught me is that teachers can make a difference in the lives of children when they enact a pedagogy that resists oppression and inequity and work towards transformation.

This moment shifted my experience, yet as I continued in school, I still felt somewhere beyond that sphere of belonging. I continued searching (then and now) for myself in the pages of books, lyrics of songs, images in magazines (thanks, Ms. Fields!), and newspapers, and in the stories of other people, specifically women, from diverse backgrounds. I needed to know stories of other people like me, who were different in the particular ways that I was different. I devoured texts like the biography of Helen Keller, Potok's (1972) *My Name is Asher Lev*, or Irving's (1989) *A Prayer for Owen Meany*, and

these stories provided entry points for me to share some part of my story (e.g. religion, immigration, family) for the first time in the context of school. These stories were, and remain, part of the traditional school canon, but at the time they were the only stories that served as both mirror and window for me.

Despite my searching over these years, it was not until adulthood that I discovered a story about a Brown, Muslim woman: the kind of story where my differences were also particularly hers. In the current political context of the United States, I am extremely concerned about the macro-level resistance to diversity coupled with the growing number of children of color in classrooms. If public schools are required by this new administration to "Make America Great Again" by reestablishing the narrative of White America, meritocracy, and the greatness of Western Civilization, then what new (and not new) acts of violence do students from diverse backgrounds stand to face within schools? How will they find space to tell their stories?

Ms. Smith, Ms. Barker, and Ms. Martinez shared similar concerns and perceived their work as classroom teachers as a form of political action (Morrell, 2004). I describe the teacher participants that I had the privilege to work with during this study as transformative intellectuals (Giroux, 1985) who were committed to enacting critical pedagogies. I was a participant observer in the teachers' classrooms, which means I rejected the role of teacher educator or coach in this project. I was there to learn and stand in solidarity with the three teacher participants. I draw from Freire's (1970/2000) vision of solidarity: "Solidarity requires that one enter into the situation of those with whom one is solidary… True solidarity is found only in the plentitude of this act of love in its existentiality, and in its praxis" (pp. 49-50). I aimed to be an active participant with the communities I was invited into, and I built relationships and grew my knowledge from the community of these classrooms. Therefore, I was a colleague, and I did not facilitate,

navigate, or lead any part of the discussion. My purpose was to focus on the teacher's journey with her students during these literacy events. I let them know that I was available in any way that served their needs. In order to consider how these multiple positionalities (e.g., critical scholar, classroom teacher, person of color) influenced my data collection and analysis, I wrote reflective memos across my engagement in these activities in order to continually examine my own assumptions.

STUDY DESIGN

Data collection and analysis for this study took place during the entire 2017-2018 academic year. I gathered data for all three cases at the same time. The scope of my research questions included how the literacy teacher facilitated and navigated a single literacy event of interactive read aloud with multicultural children's literature, as well as how the literacy teacher facilitated and navigated this work over time. I spent a total of five to eight weeks in each teacher's classroom observing and recording (audio- and video-) interactive read alouds between August 2017 and June 2018 for a total of 28 weeks across the three classrooms. I did not collect data during these weeks of the academic year for the reasons indicated: November 20-24 (Thanksgiving Break); November 27 – December 1 (Attending LRA Conference); December 18 – January 5 (Winter Break); and March 12 – April 20 (Spring Break, STAAR Testing).

Unfortunately, I was only able to observe Ms. Martinez's students during the fall 2017 semester for about five weeks. Ms. Martinez's commitments as a cooperating teacher increased during the spring 2018 semester, and it was very challenging for her to schedule time for me to visit. We tried multiple times to organize a schedule, but I was only able to observe one interactive read aloud during the spring semester. There were other days when I went, but when I arrived, Ms. Martinez had changed the schedule due

to her other commitments. Ms. Martinez always welcomed me to the classroom, and I always stayed for a while to be a member of the classroom community; however, I did not audio- or video- record these visits because I did not have IRB approval for observations during any other time besides reading instruction. After many attempts to schedule additional visits, I determined in April that it was best to keep in touch with Ms. Martinez and complete my third and fourth semi-structured interviews with her, but to stop trying to schedule visits.

Ms. Barker, Ms. Martinez, and Ms. Smith started their journeys as public school educators by embracing the workshop structure for literature instruction, and they continued to use this structure even after so many years. Unlike teachers who rely heavily on basal textbooks and scripted programs, these teachers had from the beginning of their teaching careers recognized the need for dialogic instruction and authentic curricular resources, such as multicultural children's literature. I closely followed the conversations that the teachers and students had with a single book and across books, to follow the flow of sociocultural issues that arose across time. I entered the field the week of August 21, 2017 (one week before the start of school) and exited the field June 8, 2018 (one week after the end of school). Table 3.1 outlines the four phases of data collection, focus of my work, and which sources of data were obtained at which points in the investigation.

Phase One

I received consent from the three teachers and their administrators in August 2017. During the first phase of data collection, I supported the teachers as they set up their classrooms. I spent time in the three classrooms between August 21 and September 29 in order to get to know the school and classroom communities, but more importantly for the school and classroom communities to get to know me. I spent a few full days in each teacher's classroom in order to get familiar with the routines and schedule of the

day. I conducted informal observations of the interactive read alouds until I received the signed parent and student forms. As soon as I received the required number of consent forms, I did begin to audio- and video-record the interactive read alouds. It was a priority to me that the students and their families feel comfortable and reassured about the work I planned to do in the classroom. With that in mind, I attended each teacher's back to school night, gave a brief presentation describing my project to the families, answered questions, and handed out parent consent and student assent forms. For the family members who were not in attendance, I composed an email introducing myself, and the teachers forwarded my email to the remaining families and notified them of the paperwork that would be sent home regarding my project.

Ms. Smith asked me to observe in her classroom in the afternoons when she was teaching Ms. Reynolds's students. She did not want me to observe her homeroom class because many of the students were identified as special needs, and although the parents signed the consent forms, Ms. Smith preferred to maintain the students' privacy. Furthermore, Ms. Smith had two additional teaching assistants in her classroom in the morning to provide support to the students, and she felt there would be too many people at one time. There were 19 students in Ms. Reynolds class, and I received written parent and student consent from 17 students. I did receive oral permission from the remaining two students' families, but I was never able to successfully get their paperwork back, so I excluded these two students from my data collection. In Ms. Barker's classroom there were 24 students, and I received written parent and student consent from 22 students. One student did not return the paperwork, and one student's family denied permission to participate in the study. Ms. Martinez had 10 students at the start of the year, and I received written parent and student consent from all 10 of the families. One student did

transfer to an ESL classroom per Ms. Martinez's recommendation about six weeks into the school year, and she had a total of nine students for the remainder of the year.

I conducted my first semi-structured interview with the three teachers during this time to learn about their teaching history, their perspectives on critical pedagogies, as well as to begin our conversations about the use of multicultural children's literature as a resource to enact critical pedagogies, and their experiences with this practice. As soon as I began visiting classrooms, I made a point to take photos of the classroom (e.g. work areas, libraries, book collections) in order to document the resources the teachers shared and co-constructed with their students. I took field notes during these first few weeks in all three classrooms in order to begin to capture the teachers' language, instructional style, student interactions, and routines and procedures.

During this phase, I observed Ms. Smith's classroom for two weeks (nine days), Ms. Martinez's classroom for two weeks (five days – even in the fall semester, it was challenging to establish a schedule with Ms. Martinez), and Ms. Barker's classroom for two weeks (six days), for a total of 20 interactive read alouds during the first phase of data collection.

Phase Two

I began the second phase of data collection by October 2 in all three classrooms, and it continued until the winter break. During this phase, I rotated to a different teacher each week, and I began video-recording the teachers' interactive read aloud events. I set aside the entire week to be with the teacher, but similar to the first phase of data collection, I was not always able to attend for five consecutive days due to schedule conflicts. I spent the weeks of October 2, October 16, November 6, and December 4 in Ms. Smith's classroom for a total of 12 days. I spent the weeks of October 6, October 31, and November 14 in Ms. Barker's classroom for a total of 11 days. I spent the weeks of

October 9, October 24, and November 30 in Ms. Martinez's classroom for a total of nine days. Each visit lasted between 60-120 minutes, and the duration for interactive read aloud event was typically between 20-60 minutes in length. Therefore, I observed 32 interactive read alouds during Phase Two. This schedule enabled me to observe and record multiple discussions over a single text or possibly a text set during a given week. I kept in touch with all three teachers via email, phone, and text each week, even if I was not observing in the classroom, to continue to build my relationships with them and learn about the events of the week.

As planned, I was not always able to see the entirety of read aloud unit with this schedule. For example, Ms. Barker was reading Jason Reynold's *Ghost* (2016) at this time, and she spent four weeks reading aloud this text to her class. I was able to observe two weeks of this read aloud, and although it would have been wonderful to see all four weeks, I feel confident that I was able to capture the trajectory and nature of the talk with the events I observed. As a researcher, I had to remain flexible and do my best to gather as much information as I could from my observations and my conversations with the teachers during my time in and out of the classroom. I had to accept that the conversations about the shared literature likely extended beyond the interactive read aloud event that I was not be able to capture, but this was the compromise I had to make to engage in a multi-case study. And, in response to these gaps in my observations, I tried to make up for them by spending an entire academic year on data collection.

For observations, I arrived approximately 20-30 minutes prior to the start of the interactive read aloud. At this time, I greeted the teacher and students, helped the teacher with any tasks needed, and set up the recording devices. I also stayed for about 30 minutes after the read aloud in order to continue to take field notes, support the teacher with any tasks, and gather my materials. In my proposal, I planned to debrief with the

teachers for a few minutes before and after the interactive read aloud event in order to discuss what they were thinking about as they moved into their teaching, and I was able to do this often with Ms. Barker and Ms. Martinez because their interactive read aloud was preceded by lunch or the conference period; however, I was never able to talk much with Ms. Smith because the interactive read aloud happened in the middle of a block of instruction. As I expressed earlier, it was never my intention to interrupt their day or act as a coach, so I often kept these conversations casual and informal.

Phase Three

After the winter break in early January, I began my third phase of data collection, and I revised my structure at this time per my committee's suggestion at my proposal defense and per my conversations with my Co-Chairs during the semester. I collaborated with each teacher to select at least one unit of instruction centered on critical sociocultural knowledge for the third phase of data collection. This phase of data collection occurred between early January and mid-March (up to Spring Break). Instead of rotating across the teachers and observing them for a one-week period every three weeks, I did my best to schedule longer observation windows with each teacher in order to capture most of a unit of study. It was at this time when many different scheduling challenges arose for Ms. Martinez. And, it was imperative that I observe Ms. Smith (3rd grade) and Ms. Barker's classrooms (4th grade) before the spring testing season began after Spring Break. Typically, at that time, visitors were not encouraged to visit the schools, and I was fortunate to receive permission from Ms. Smith's district to observe during the spring semester. Although I attempted to visit Ms. Martinez multiple times during this phase of data collection, I was unable to observe any interactive read alouds during this time. Ms. Smith spent nearly ten weeks on teaching various time periods of the African American Civil Rights movement beginning at the end of January through

early March. I spent four weeks in Ms. Smith's classroom during this unit with a total of 14 classroom observations. And, I observed Ms. Barker's unit on the African American Civil Rights movement and her Signs and Symbols unit between January and February for three weeks with a total of 11 observations. My original plan was to meet with the teachers for a third interview after this observation cycle at the end of March; however, due to the teachers' busy schedules, we decided to postpone this interview to later in the spring.

Phase Four

Phase Four took place between April 23 and June 1. I observed one interactive read aloud in Ms. Martinez's room and three additional interactive read alouds in Ms. Barker and Ms. Smith's classrooms. I conducted the third and fourth semi-structured interviews in early May and mid-June. I shared my preliminary findings with each of the three teachers. This served as a way to support their professional development in their use of multicultural children's literature as a method of critical pedagogy, as well as to engage in member checking of my initial analysis. I shared parts of the stories I was beginning to construct with the three teachers and students as a way of sharing what they have taught me about reading the word and the world (Freire, 1970/2000) for the purpose of disrupting oppression and striving for equity as a community.

Between the dates of December 18 and January 5 (between phases 2 and 3) and March 12 – April 20 (between phases 3 and 4), I built in two extended periods of time to step away from the classroom and spend time on data recording and analysis. I used this time to catch up on expanding field notes, organizing artifacts, and transcribing and analyzing interviews. I also took this time to begin a cross-case analysis of the teachers' interactive read alouds. I composed analytic memos to capture my initial understandings of the patterns and themes I saw emerging. I felt that it was necessary and insightful to

share what I was learning during these mid-study reviews with my teacher participants, in order to center their voices and ideas as part of my meaning making process – my praxis (Freire, 1970/2000).

Table 3.1 Timeline for Data Collection and Analysis

Dates	Phase of Research	Focus of Work	Data Sources
14 Aug-29 Sep	Phase 1: Obtaining Consent and Becoming Familiar with Context	Obtaining parent consent and student assent Initial interviews with teachers Becoming familiar with classroom contexts Bi-monthly meeting with Dr. Maloch	Interview 1 with teachers (audio-recorded) Observations in classrooms, including full day observations –audio- and video-recording once forms were signed of read aloud Field notes
2 Oct-17 Nov; Thanks-giving; 4 Dec-15 Dec	Phase 2: Multi-Classroom (Multicase) Study	Collecting qualitative data on while group interactive read aloud Collecting qualitative data on teachers' reflecting into and on whole-group literature discussion with multicultural children's literature - informal conversations before and after event Analysis: Daily review of data (review video-recordings and expand video log, expand field notes, initial coding, and composing analytic memos) Bi-monthly meeting with Dr. Maloch	Interview 2 with teachers (audio-recorded, mid-December) Observations and field notes of interactive read alouds (Rotation cycle, 1 week per teacher for up to 3 weeks per teacher) Video- and audio- recordings of whole group interactive read aloud Artifact collection: images of anchor charts created during read aloud/literature discussion, students' reading responses to whole group read aloud/literature discussion

Table 3.1 Timeline for Data Collection and Analysis (continued)

18 Dec- 5 Jan Winter Holiday	Mid-study Data Analysis	Comprehensively review data collected thus far Initial coding – Identify emerging findings Examine across cases and triangulation of data sources – interviews, video-recordings/transcripts, and artifacts Shared emerging findings with teacher participants and planned visits for the remainder of the year Bi-monthly meeting with Dr. Maloch	Interviews 1 and 2 (transcribed) Observations and field notes of whole group read aloud and literature discussions Video and audio recordings of whole group read aloud and literature discussions Analytic memos
8 Jan- 9 Mar	Phase 3: Multi-Classroom (Multicase) Study: Identify Specific Units to Observe (based on emerging findings from mid-study data analysis	Collecting qualitative data around teacher/students whole group literature discussions around multicultural children's literature Collecting qualitative data on teachers' reflecting into and on whole-group literature discussion with multicultural children's literature Analysis: Daily review of data (review video-recordings and expand video log, expand field notes, initial coding, and composing analytic memos)	Observations and field notes of whole group read aloud and literature discussions – 3 weeks per teacher Video- and audio- recordings of whole group interactive read alouds Artifact collection: images of anchor charts created during read aloud/literature discussion, students' reading responses to whole group read aloud/literature discussion

Table 3.1 Timeline for Data Collection and Analysis (continued)

12 Mar- 20 Apr Spring Break, STAAR Testing	Mid-study Data Analysis	Comprehensively review data collected thus far Continue building on emerging findings – 2nd round of coding Examine across cases and triangulation of data sources – interviews, video-recordings/transcripts, and artifacts Bi-monthly meeting with Dr. Maloch	Observations and field notes of whole group read aloud and literature discussions Video and audio recordings of whole group read aloud and literature discussions Analytic memos
23 Apr- 1 Jun Final two weeks in each classroom	Phase 4: Field exit	Sharing preliminary findings with teachers Bi-monthly meeting with Dr. Maloch	Observations and field notes of whole group read aloud and literature discussions – 2 weeks per teacher Video and audio recordings of whole group read aloud and literature discussions Artifact collection: images of anchor charts created during read aloud/literature discussion, students' reading responses to whole group read aloud/literature discussion Interview 3 with teachers (audio-recorded)
June 2018- November 2018	Formal analysis	Transcribing interviews and selected video/audio recordings Coding and analyzing data Bi-monthly meeting with Dr. Maloch	Interviews 4 with teachers (audio-recorded) Observations and field notes of literacy instruction; Video and audio recordings of literacy instruction Artifact collection: student writing; teacher anecdotal notes Analytic memos Theoretical memos

Methods of Data Collection

I used an ethnographic approach to data collection (Erickson, 1984), and I engaged in participant observation and open-ended, semi-structured interviews. The data sources analyzed and reported here consist of ethnographic field notes, video- and audio-recordings of whole group interactive read alouds of multicultural children's literature, four formal semi-structured interviews with each teacher throughout the academic year, and classroom artifacts.

Participant observations and field notes. In my role as a critical researcher and emerging ethnographer, I immersed myself in each site over an extended period of time as I observed and gathered data that allowed me to make meaning of the teacher's enactment of critical pedagogies during this particular literacy event/structure that took place between the teacher and the students. I also documented each teacher's journey over an extended period of time as she navigated within each interactive read aloud, as well as across these literacy events. Each teacher's classroom served as a case, and I had a total of three cases in this study. In total, I observed a total of 64 interactive read alouds: 10 in Ms. Martinez's classroom, 25 in Ms. Barker's classroom, and 29 in Ms. Smith's classroom. Glesne (2011) explains the tensions inherent in the role of participant observer:

> As a researcher, your observer stance can make you and others feel as though you are a spy of sorts, while your participant stance can indicate a closeness or an involvement that may be suspect because of your role as researcher (and observer)…You need to decide, in relationship to the kind of research you choose to do, how much of a participant and how much of an observer you want to be. (p. 38)

As I explained in my position statement, I was a participant in the classroom, doing my best to support the teacher and students. However, I was a participant-observer during the interactive read aloud. The purpose of my study was to follow the teacher's journey as a

critical educator with her students, and I was not interested in shaping or interfering with the interactions that occurred in the moment or across events in more ways than my presence and my tools already did. The teachers and I did share new book titles and resources with each other, and I became friends with each of my teacher participants, but I was not part of the planning and teaching of the literature. I remained open to learning, and worked to keep my perspective flexible (Glesne, 2011; Stake, 1995). As I observed what was happening in the moment and across time, I returned to my analysis process and continually interrogated my own assumptions and values in order to broaden my view, so I could consider multiple perspectives and interpretations of the phenomena I observed (Kumashiro, 2001).

Acting as a participant observer, I collected ethnographic field notes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995) primarily on the literacy event of the whole group interactive read aloud and all of the activities associated with that event, along with audio- and/or video-recording of the events. I began my note-taking process about the activity in the classroom as soon as I arrived, and in my field notes, I recorded the movement and events that were taking place outside of the frame of the video-recordings. I expanded my field notes, with the aid of the video- and audio- recordings, within 24-48 hours of each observation. In that process, I added methodological notes to document that day's data collection process, as well as any changes or revisions that were made in the data collection process. I added personal notes to document my involvement in the classroom that day, as well as any conversations and interactions that I had with students, teachers, parents, or administration. I also added theoretical notes to begin to bridge my conceptual frames with the data as I move towards analysis and interpretation (Corsaro, 1985).

Video- and audio- recordings. Video-recordings and audio-recordings allowed me to capture the exchange both recordings were essential to my project because the

teachers' (and students') discourses were one of the primary data sources I analyzed to study the strategies these three teachers used to address critical sociocultural knowledge and issues of inequity, as well as how they navigated students' critical encounters (DeNicolo & Franquiz, 2006) at macro and micro levels (Erickson, 2004) during this event across one academic year.

I had one video-recorder that I placed at different locations of the room depending on the teacher's organization of interactive read aloud event. For example, most often the students and the teacher met in the whole group meeting area, but there was definitely some movement during the event. In response, I would move the video-recorder around in order to make sure I could capture the teacher and her talk and as many of the students as possible; however, I would often have the camera facing the teacher, which meant I could not always see all of the students' faces. In addition, I had a ZOOM audio-recorder that I placed somewhere near the center/side of the whole group meeting area. It was never difficult to make out the teacher's voice, but it was not always possible to capture everything the students said, especially during whole group turn and talk or small group collaborations. In these moments, the teachers would often carry around the ZOOM recorder with them as they visited with small groups of students – and I did the best I could to capture student talk in my field notes during turn and talk. If I needed an additional audio-recorder, I would also use my phone. I also used my phone to take pictures of the classroom and student-created artifacts (e.g., language charts and artistic responses).

The students remained intrigued by the recording tools for the entirety of the project – often speaking into the audio-recorder and waving to the video-recorder. Therefore, I knew that they were aware of their conversations being recorded, but I hope that it was not too distracting for them once they began their read aloud. Ms. Barker

never redirected the students for their interactions with the recording devices; however, at times Ms. Smith and Ms. Martinez had to remind the students about why I was using them and that they should be careful to not disturb them. The teachers would let me know when the interactive read aloud was beginning and ending, and I captured the entire event, including the teacher's book introduction and the literature discussions that took place before, during, and after the interactive read aloud. If I was able to debrief with the teacher for any significant amount of time, I audio-recorded those conversations. I did share a copy of all the video-recordings I made in Ms. Smith's classroom with Ms. Smith to support her in her projects for graduate school.

Semi-structured interviews. Freire's (1970/2000) notion of praxis is that reflection and action happen simultaneously. Interviews can help access perspectives and interpretations of the social actors (e.g. the teachers) within the context beyond the researcher's ability to observe (Merriam, 2002). I conducted four semi-structured interviews with each of the three participating teachers. During these interviews, I invited them to reflect on their practice with multicultural children's literature, as well as their work as critical educators. These interviews took between forty minutes to two hours. I understood that my presence in the classroom as the researcher and interviewer had an impact on the teachers' responses (Alim, 2004). Therefore, I designed the interviews to be as open-ended and straightforward as possible, building from what the teachers wanted to discuss about the two broad topics, as well as inquiring further into practices, structures, or talk that I was observing (e.g., the use of turn and talk or Ms. Smith's use of the term "up-standers"). I have included sample questions from the interviews in the Appendix.

In addition to these formal interviews, I also kept in touch with the teachers in person and via email, text, and social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter). In

these conversations, teachers shared their thoughts on occurrences during the interactive read alouds, as well as more general thoughts on their upcoming units or sometimes their concerns regarding students. Descriptions of these informal conversations were recorded in writing and treated as data.

Artifacts. In addition to the video- and audio- recordings, field notes, and interviews, I collected artifacts that further supported my inquiry into the teachers' enactment of critical pedagogies. These artifacts included images of language charts (Roser, Hoffman, Labbo, & Farest, 1992) that the teacher and the students co-constructed during the interactive read alouds, photos or copies of reading responses the students created in response to the read alouds, photos across the year (nearly each visit) of the classrooms in order to capture the changing book displays, hallway displays, bulletin boards, family celebrations, screenshots of the teachers' social media posts about teaching, literature, and activism, and other classroom artifacts. I asked each teacher for weekly lesson plans, but it was difficult to get the lesson plans from the teachers, so I eventually stopped asking. I also intended to have complete lists of all the books the teachers read aloud, but again, this was difficult data to gather because it required extra work on the part of the teachers to either write the book titles for me in an email or interrupt their teaching during my observations. However, I did make sure to document the titles of the texts, as well as the origins of the texts (e.g., Global Goal videos in Ms. Smith's classroom) for which I observed the interactive read aloud event. I was also able to capture new titles of books in the classrooms through my photographs of the book displays. My goal was to cause as little disruption as possible during my observation, and I did not feel that it was appropriate to interrupt the teachers with additional requests ever. I felt that setting up the video- and audio-recorders was more than enough disruption during each visit.

Data Analysis

This study was a multiple case study project, or cross-case analysis, and each classroom context served as a case. I drew on Thomas (2016) for guidance on the analysis process of a multiple case study. In a multiple case study it is necessary to remember that "each individual subject is less important in itself than the comparison each offers with others…you are comparing *these* cases…a cross-case analysis is about the 'guts' of a case, seen in its wholeness" (pp. 172-173). In this project, my intent was to study the "wholeness" of teachers' enactment of critical pedagogies, and I analyzed each teacher's approach within the case, while also comparing these cases continually to each other in order to present an across-case narrative on enactment.

Data were analyzed using an inductive approach (Erickson, 1996) informed by the constant comparative approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Tesch, 1990). In constant-comparative approaches:

> The main intellectual tool is comparison. The method of comparing and contrasting is used for practically all intellectual tasks during analysis: forming categories, establishing the boundaries of the categories, assigning the segments to categories, summarizing the content of each category, finding negative evidence, etc. The goal is to discern conceptual similarities, to refine the discriminative power of categories, and to discover patterns (Tesch, 1990, p. 96).

Utilizing the structure of a multiple case study and an inductive analysis approach, I worked to uncover the patterns of enactment across these three classrooms. I also drew on ethnographic microanalysis (Erickson, 1996) to analyze the teachers' discourses during the interactive read aloud. This approach to analysis afforded opportunities to closely analyze the verbal and nonverbal discourse of the teachers and students as the teachers navigated tensions within the interactive read-aloud discussions. According to Erickson (1996) "…ethnographic microanalysis is concerned to show that, in communication, people are not just following cultural rules for style but are actively

constructing what they do. Those constructions differ in each concrete circumstance of their enactment" (p. 287). This speaks to the improvisational and authentic nature of interaction between the speaker and the listener. This was a critical part of my analysis process in order to address research questions two and three. I needed to pay close attention and code, create categories, and notice patterns based on what was happening in the interactions between the teachers and students as they addressed critical sociocultural knowledge and navigated tensions during the interactive read aloud event.

Data analysis occurred in three phases. Phase One occurred during data collection. Phase Two and Phase Three occurred following data collection between the summer of 2018 through the spring of 2019.

Phase One. During the months of data collection, I began analysis by considering/analyzing each day's data as I collected it. As Erickson (2004) states, "field notes, interview transcripts, and archival records (as well as audiotapes and videotapes) are most appropriately conceived not as 'data' in their unreduced form—they are resources for data construction within which data must be discovered" (p. 486). In response to this principle, each night, I expanded my daily field notes with further detail from the day's observation including making note of informal conversations I had with faculty, students, or families. I documented my methodological, personal, and theoretical notes within my field notes (Corsaro, 1985). At this time, I also transcribed and open coded the first semi-structured interview. And as part of the open coding process I began to develop categories and additional codes within the early categories. For example, it was during this interview that teachers shared their teaching history, vision statements as critical educators, reasons for using multicultural children's literature, and their thoughts on the purpose of the interactive read aloud. As I identified these components from the interviews, I began the process of triangulating these data sources (e.g., field notes,

photos, and interview data) and began writing analytic memos to help me make meaning of how the work the teachers were doing in the classroom related to the critical pedagogical intentions that they had expressed in their interviews. And, furthermore, it was during this stage of analysis that I began to identify key words and phrases the teachers would use often with their students to set the tone for their year together (e.g., Ms. Smith's use of "upstanders," Ms. Barker's emphasis on "be kind" and "have empathy," Ms. Martinez's talk about the "global community" [Phase One, field notes, August/September]. I organized these terms into categories, and I made notes/wrote memos of how and when the teachers used these phrases for myself to think deeper (e.g., *When does Ms. Smith remind students that they are up standers, not bystanders?)*.

As I began the process of video- and audio- recording the read aloud I also created activity logs of the recordings, wrote summaries of the kinds of activities occurring, and flagged relevant sections for future transcription and analysis. I was very intent on paying close attention to the micro- and macro-level sociocultural issues (Erickson, 2004) the teachers were discussing with their students during the interactive read aloud, and when the teachers or students brought up this type of knowledge, I did my best to flag it in my field notes, as well as in the activity logs. This process supported my work of further generating preliminary codes and hypotheses that were grounded in the data I collected, particularly in noticing and naming the specific topics that these teachers were bringing forward through their read aloud. For example, I learned that Ms. Martinez spoke regularly about the topic of immigration with her young first graders, and I would flag it in my notes every time it came up. As I reviewed the data and generated preliminary codes, I composed analytic memos to further my awareness. And as a result, I started to notice the other topics related to immigration that Ms. Martinez also brought to her students' attention or that they brought to her attention during the whole group read

aloud discussion, including Trump's wall, migrant farm workers, ICE, reasons people immigrate, safety, methods of travel, borders, geography of North and South. Under immigration, I had a growing list of codes that addressed the various ways this topic was being considered in Ms. Martinez's classroom. And furthermore, as I moved through the classrooms, I noticed overlaps and intersections in topics and resources across these three teachers.

I took the same approach to data analysis within each case, but it was during this phase, that I began to look across cases to compare what I was seeing across these three contexts. At this time, I was beginning to notice patterns in topics and issues that these three teachers were addressing with their students. In other words, for example, all three teachers spent time reading multicultural children's literature on the topic of immigration, and all three communities spoke at length about immigration and immigrants in local and global contexts. At the same time, I was also developing codes and categories for structural/organizational approaches the teachers were implementing within their classrooms, and again, I was simultaneously writing analytic memos about the patterns I was noticing across the cases. And, as I continued to expand on these patterns, I was considering and documenting the similarities and differences across the three teachers classrooms. Using an inductive approach, I began to generate themes/categories evident within and across the three teachers' enactment of critical pedagogies in preparation for and during the interactive read aloud events.

By the 2018 spring semester, I had begun to identify particular structures (e.g., book introduction), as well as discourses, drawing on Erickson's (1996) ethnographic microanalysis, that the teachers were implementing as components of their enactment of critical pedagogies during their interactive read alouds. After I began to identify these patterns and inquired into them with the teachers during the second semi-structured

interview, I revised my method for taking field notes to include making note of these structures and discourses in the activity logs. I continued to flag and code within and across the interactive read alouds for the macro and micro level issues (Erickson, 2004) that arose in the individual teacher's classroom, as well as across the teachers' classrooms. For example, I noticed that each teacher opened their read aloud with a formal book introduction with the intention of establishing the sociocultural and critical focus the teacher and the students would attend to that day. In addition, the teachers often provided the students a guiding question during this book introduction to support them in considering the text/narrative from a critical perspective. I created a chart for each teacher that listed the unit of study/theme, the book information (title, author, illustrator, year published, and genre), the data resources gathered for the day, and the teacher's guiding question from the book introduction. I have included a sample of this chart (Table 3.2) for Ms. Smith's unit on *Global Goals*.

Table 3.2 Sample Analysis Chart
Theme: Global Goals, 3 observations completed

Date	Theme	Text(s)	Guiding Question(s) from Book Introduction	Artifacts Collected
10.18.17	Global Citizenship	If the World Were a Village: A Book about the World's People Author: David J. Smith; Ill. Shelagh Armstrong	What resources are in danger? What does it mean to be a citizen of the world? (Students collecting data – completing surveys)	Video; Audio; FNs; Photos – of text, students' work, instruction
10.19.17	World's Largest Lesson – introduction to UN Project	2 Videos from WLL – one with Malala and one with Emma Watson	Think about what inspires you about this video – what can you do in your life to make change?	Video; Audio; FNs; Photos of students' written responses to guiding question
10.20.17	Gender Equality – Action Project – submit data to Global Goals database	Emma Watson – WLL video	We are talking about how can we think about these big things in our planet – what can we do as individuals to make a change?	Video; Audio; FNs; Photos of students' data sheets

I was able to look across these charts for the fall and spring semesters to analyze the nature and content of the guiding questions within and across the cases, as well as keep the questions connected with the texts and theme of the unit.

Phase Two. After my year in the teachers' classrooms, I worked through a process of data reduction and organization. At this time, I transcribed (Ochs, 1979) flagged audio- and video- data, including all of the teachers' book introductions, all of the moments of turn and talk across the three classrooms, and all of the moments that I marked during my initial review of the data. I also transcribed the third and fourth semi-structured interviews and completed open coding. I organized all of the classroom photos and student artifacts sequentially by teacher, date, and unit of study in order to continue the process of triangulation of the data sources.

To answer the research questions, I first conducted separate analyses (again) of a range of materials, including the four semi-structured interviews, field notes, transcriptions, activity logs, analytic memos, teachers' social media posts, and personal memos documenting informal conversations. Next, I brought these sources together through triangulation. This step enabled me to form a comprehensive picture of the many ways the teachers' reflections, actions, and discourses were all-encompassing, intersected, and built upon each other in order to continue to sustain and grow their enactment of critical pedagogies in and out of the context of school.

During this time, with a list of preliminary themes, categories, and codes generated, I read the entire data set again, and confirmed, disconfirmed, or collapsed codes. When the first round of coding was complete and my preliminary codes were organized, I reviewed my research questions and revisited my corpus of data. It was during this second phase of analysis that I revised the order of my research questions. Initially, I considered the research question regarding how the teachers sustain and grow their enactment of critical pedagogies as secondary to the question of how they enact these critical pedagogies. However, as a result of my ongoing analysis, it became evident to me that the approaches these teachers drew on to sustain and grow their enactment

over the long term served as springboards for what they did with their students in the classroom. Their own learning seemed to directly influence their own enactment for sharing their knowledge on issues of equity, anti-oppression, and social justice with their students. As I worked through the process of making meaning of my data, it became evident to me that the teachers' enactment of critical pedagogies with students was strongly influenced by their own work to sustain and grow their enactment of critical pedagogies.

Phase Three. In phase three of analysis, I focused on the broader patterns across my cases. For example, in my original proposal, I expected that my focus would be primarily on the teachers' discourse during the interactive read aloud event. However, I gradually came to understand that the teachers' strategies for addressing critical sociocultural knowledge and issues of inequity started long before the interactive read aloud event; starting with their planning of the curriculum. Therefore, I analyzed, categorized, and defined how the teachers planned for and implemented structures within the interactive read aloud, as well as how they planned and improvised their discourses to enact critical pedagogies during the event. The final phase of coding also included a search for disconfirming evidence and discrepant cases. As I generated hypotheses about my data, I re-read for both examples and counter-examples of the patterns I was noticing. As I found counter-examples, I wrote further analytic memos to situate these counter-examples within my narrative, and this supported my process of revising my codes, hypotheses, and findings.

It was during this final round of analysis after data collection was complete that continued to refine my analysis process, including a more fine grained analysis of selected portions of transcriptions for each teacher across the year. For example, applying Erickson's ethnographic microanalysis (1996) was a particularly important process for

analyses of video-recordings in order to address research question three: *How do teachers navigate the students' critical encounters during interactive read aloud?* In this analysis, I paid close attention to the verbal and nonverbal interactions between the teacher and the students, and I identified two types of critical encounters (DeNicolo & Franquiz, 2006), or moments of surprise, alarm, disruption: one that the teacher nudged the students into experiencing in response to a troubling moment in the text and one that the students experienced through their own interactions with the text. As the teachers were reading aloud, they were paying close attention to how the students were listening – to their listening activity. And, in the moments of critical encounters, the students' nonverbal interactions (e.g., sitting up, opening their mouth, raising their hands) were as important as their talk (e.g., talking back to the book, turning and talking to each other). Erickson (1996) notes,

> …Feedback about how what is being said is coming across to the listeners while the speaker's talk is being produced. Thus audience feedback and the production of coherent discourse by speakers are both "on-line" processes. They take place in real time, and they influence one another continually as speaking and listening are being produced jointly in conversation. (p. 289)

In response to critical encounters, I began to see a structural pattern within and across the three classrooms in which the teachers frequently invited students to "turn and talk" to each other as a way to navigate the critical encounter. I counted over 150 incidents of turn and talk across the three classrooms, and I observed that teachers invited that participation structure before, during, and after the read aloud. Ultimately, I created a spreadsheet for each teacher and documented and open coded all of the turn and talk events for the fall and spring semesters.

At this stage, I also returned to my theoretical frameworks (critical literacy, (Freire, 1970/2000); anti-oppressive education (Kumashiro, 2001); and humanizing

critical sociocultural knowledge (Brown, 2013)) to support my data analysis process. Glesne (2011) states that theory should be used to make connections across the data in order to make sense of and explain research findings. The frameworks from which I draw insist that the contexts are dynamic and unfinished. I approached my further analysis with the understanding that the teachers and students were all in the process of becoming (Freire, 1970/2000). These frameworks guided my readings of data sources and my triangulation of these sources for my final stages of analysis.

Trustworthiness

The design of this study included several steps to ensure trustworthiness. Some of the practices I implemented aimed at strengthening the validity of my findings included:

- Extended time in the field (one academic year, August 2017 – June 2018);
- Triangulation across multiple data sources, including video/audio data, field notes, interviews, and multiple artifacts;
- Member-checking with participants to ensure my interpretation of the data "rings true" with their intention and experience (Merriam, 2002, p. 26);
- Searching for discrepant/counter-examples within the data to ensure consistency of emerging patterns; and
- Sustained engagement in the context to "ensure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon" (Merriam, 2002, p. 26)

Limitations of Design

Although I spent an extended amount of time in each teacher's classroom for the length of an entire academic year, the schedule did not allow me to be a participant observer each day of the year in all three classrooms. I had to gather some data about the interactive read alouds that took place when I was not in the classroom as part of my

communication with the classroom teachers on the weeks I was working in another classroom. Erickson (2004) explains that even when one is present for the talk, it is unlikely that the researcher will be able to access and interpret the complexity of the interactions in their entirety.

> In order to study the actual conduct of talk one must find a particular set of interlocutors, in a particular social situation, a spatial arena of narrow compass in which the interlocutors are co-present by mutual attention sustained across a brief strip of time. The researcher records the interactional behaviors that occur and then studies them by repeated reviewing, transcription, and analysis. What happens temporally upstream in related spatial settings – for these particular social actors and for others like them – is not directly available to the researcher – nor is what happens downstream. (p. 194)

This concern compounded on the weeks when I was not present in two of the three classrooms. Even though these weeks resulted in gaps in the data, I approached this research through the lens that all stories are partial (Kumashiro, 2001), so I did my best, with the help of the participants and the multiple data sources, to piece together an honest narrative about the teacher's enactment of critical pedagogies in all three classrooms.

A second limitation of the study design, shared with most qualitative studies, is the lack of generalizability. Because of the qualitative approaches to site selection and data collection, my findings from this study are not generalizable across contexts. However, rather than seeking to understand how teachers enact critical pedagogies in all elementary literacy classrooms, this multi-case study approach instead sought to understand the different ways that these interactions might occur within elementary classrooms, with the aim of generating themes and strategies that will support elementary literacy teachers in their use of multicultural children's literature to enact critical pedagogies with students, particularly within contexts of increasing accountability and standardization.

Chapter 4:

Teachers' Methods to Sustain and Grow Their Critical Pedagogies

"Even if my voice shakes, I'm still going to say it."
[Ms. Smith, Interview One, September 2017]

INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines how three self-identified critical educators sought to sustain and grow their enactment of critical pedagogies as elementary literacy teachers. In Chapter Five and Chapter Six, I will present my findings to the following two research questions: *During whole-group discussions of multicultural children's literature, how do teachers address critical sociocultural knowledge and issues of inequity?* And, *how do teachers who practice critical pedagogies navigate the critical encounters that arise when they discuss multicultural children's literature?* In this chapter, I present findings in response to the following research question: *How do elementary teachers sustain and grow their enactment of critical pedagogies?*

My analysis revealed that teachers sustained and grew their enactment of critical pedagogies by designing an "all-encompassing" curriculum of experiences (Brown, 2013) across their professional and personal lives, engaging in social justice praxis, and pursuing opportunities to learn new critical sociocultural knowledge. In addition, analysis revealed that each teacher's self-developed, all-encompassing curriculum was situated in both in- and out-of-school contexts.

Brown (2013) defines sociocultural knowledge as "referring to social, cultural, economic, political and historical knowledge that informs how societies and schools operate" (p. 319). In this general definition, sociocultural knowledge is not intentionally grounded in a critical stance that recognizes and acknowledges power. In other words,

one can approach or invoke sociocultural knowledge (attending to social and cultural matters) without adopting a critical perspective on power dynamics. In contrast, the term "critical sociocultural knowledge" (Brown, 2013) denotes a critical standpoint toward power structures; individuals demonstrate this form of knowledge when they analyze how schools and societies operate in order to challenge and disrupt dominant narratives.

In their work to develop their critical sociocultural knowledge, each teacher developed an all-encompassing curriculum for herself. In response to their own experiences and learning as a result of their curricula, Ms. Barker, Ms. Martinez, and Ms. Smith drew on their own critical sociocultural knowledge as critical educators in order to grow and sustain their enactment of critical pedagogies with their students. I use the terms *sustaining* and *growing* to emphasize that these three teachers came to this project with substantial critical sociocultural knowledge, which they sought to hold on to (sustain) and to deepen over time.

Each of the teacher participants in this study self-identified as critical educators. For example, during our first interview, Ms. Barker explained her identity as a teacher:

> I feel like I have through all that time just kind of like become who I am as a teacher and now I am able to be on my own and push against the grain and do what I think is right without worrying about getting in trouble or, you know? So, I feel like I've become who I am as a teacher" [Interview Transcript, September 2017].

Ms. Barker, after over a decade in the classroom, stated confidently that her work as *teacher* was to "push against the grain," and she no longer feared getting in trouble with the power structures of the public school institution. Instead, she accepted that "getting in trouble" might be the price she pays for being a critical educator who does what she "think(s) is right." Ms. Barker's sense of herself as a critical educator paralleled Ms. Smith and Ms. Martinez's sentiments, as I will illustrate throughout this chapter. I

accepted their stance as critical educators without question throughout the process. In other words, it was never my intention to teach them about critical theory, but rather, to learn from them about how the enactment of critical pedagogies looked, sounded, and felt in practice.

As I learned about their work beyond their role as classroom teachers, I found that these teachers had actively pursued additional experiences that supported their efforts to "push against the grain." In the following sections, I identify the approaches (e.g., all-encompassing curriculum) and stances (e.g., embrace becoming, seek crisis, willingness to improvise) through which these teachers cultivated their own critical sociocultural knowledge. Next, I explain how the teachers also did this work in in-school contexts (e.g., in the classroom, leadership initiatives in the district, and collaboration with institutions of higher education). Lastly, I describe how the teachers did this work in out-of-school contexts (e.g., personal reading of multicultural children's literature, community and activism, and being mothers).

TEACHERS' APPROACHES AND STANCES

I use the term "curriculum" to describe the experiences that these teachers pursued and engaged in to increase their critical sociocultural knowledge. Analysis indicated that as critical educators, Ms. Martinez, Ms. Smith, and Ms. Barker had all spent years undertaking an intentional journey to solidify their anti-oppressive approaches to education. Freire (1970/2000) wrote, "Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other" (p. 72). Freire's description of knowledge reflects what I observed of the ways knowledge worked for Ms. Smith, Ms. Martinez, and Ms. Barker. In order to avoid the stagnation of their critical

sociocultural knowledge, the teachers immersed themselves in experiences that would serve as their form of "restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry." The teachers engaged in their self-developed all-encompassing curriculum through a series of experiences that were grounded in interactions and dialogue with self and others. The teachers were not passive recipients of critical sociocultural knowledge; rather, they actively pursued this knowledge through learning and community engagement.

In order to identify the experiences through which these teachers grew their critical sociocultural knowledge, I returned to the conceptual frames that guided this project: critical literacy (Freire, 1970), anti-oppressive education (Kumashiro, 2001), and humanizing critical sociocultural knowledge (Brown, 2013). I used these frames to analyze multiple data sources (audio and video recordings, transcriptions, field notes, memos, and artifacts (e.g., social media posts). My analysis revealed that the teachers designed their own all-encompassing (Brown, 2013) curriculum to continue their journey to *becoming* (Freire, 1970/2000) critical educators. In doing so, they exemplified the following principles: they *embraced becoming* (Freire, 1970/2000)*, sought crisis* (Kumashiro, 2001; 2009), and *improvised* (Brown, 2013). Throughout the chapter, I will refer to these concepts to describe how these three teachers sought to sustain and grow their critical pedagogies.

All-Encompassing Approach

I argue that the teachers' work to sustain and grow their critical pedagogies was *all-encompassing*, a key tenet of Brown's (2013) theory of humanizing critical sociocultural knowledge. Brown's theory is situated in the context of school and the art of teaching; however, my analysis extends her principles to consider the work the teachers were doing both in- and out-of-school. According to Brown (2018), when the work is all-encompassing,

> We don't do this work only at the level of curriculum [in school]. It's not only about what we're going to bring into the room. It's about larger processes. Teaching that attends to humanizing critical sociocultural knowledge is all-encompassing of the entire teaching and learning process. [Presentation, NCTE 2018]

I argue that in order to take up a humanizing and critical approach to sociocultural knowledge, each teacher in my study designed some type of *all-encompassing* curriculum that enabled her to pursue this endeavor both in-and out-of-school, professionally and personally. For example, the teachers activated their critical sociocultural knowledge by participating in protests, supporting non-profit organizations, reading diverse literature for both personal enrichment and professional use, writing grants, and collaborating with local universities.

Through my analysis, I began to understand that service was a central characteristic of such an all-encompassing curriculum. As the examples in this chapter will illustrate, the teachers were serving and teaching as they were simultaneously learning across all of these contexts. In order to be both a student and a teacher (Freire, 1970/2000) of critical pedagogy, the act of service was essential, since ultimately, the heart of critical pedagogy is the principle that we (both the oppressed and the oppressors) are working for the liberation of the oppressed (Freire, 1970/2000). These three teacher participants engaged and supported many others in learning about inequity and the need for social justice reform and education. While furthering their own learning of critical sociocultural knowledge through a series of experiences, Ms. Martinez, Ms. Barker, and Ms. Smith gave much of themselves in the form of service to their schools and communities. Before sharing my analysis of the teachers' all-encompassing curriculum, I outline and describe three common stances that these three teachers adopted as they navigated across these experiences: they embraced becoming, sought crisis, and were willing to improvise.

Embracing becoming. During the interviews, the teachers described themselves as still growing as teachers – similar to Freire's (1970/2000) notions of *becoming*. These three teachers embraced the *unfinished* (Freire, 1970/2000) nature of their learning and growth as critical educators (Brown, 2013). They understood that the journey of their education was always ongoing, and they demonstrated a sense of becoming (Freire, 1970/2000) in their daily lives through praxis (action-reflection-action) (Freire, 1970/2000). For example, during our first interview, Ms. Martinez described a "constant" process of reflection and growth:

> Being a teacher is a constant journey - constantly. And I reflect a lot, and I'll be honest, it's not politically correct, but I pray a lot… So, I guess I reflect on that, like, am I being patient enough? Am I being compassionate enough? Am I giving myself enough without getting angry or frustrated? Well, I do get angry. I do get frustrated, but I have to - I have to catch it. I tell the kids, "Aaaah! I'm getting frustrated right now, but remember Gandhi said, 'It's OK to get mad. I'm just gonna...'" because I read them that book about Gandhi. It's OK to get mad, how am I going to use that anger? [Interview 1 Transcript, September 2017].

Although all three teachers firmly identified themselves as critical educators, they all expressed an ongoing need to learn for the sake of sustaining and growing their critical pedagogies. Ms. Martinez reflected on the question of whether it was okay for her, as a critical educator, to have feelings of anger or frustration in her work, and she shared that she expressed each of these feelings during class in order to "catch it," name it, and make it productive for both herself and her students. Specifically, by naming these emotions, Ms. Martinez sought to show her students that people who work to make change for other people can feel "frustrated." In the course of this reflection, she also aligned herself with a critical educator whom she admires deeply, Gandhi, to remind students that even this influential activist and teacher sometimes felt angry too.

Throughout the year, Ms. Barker and Ms. Smith also named their emotions to the students in response to what was happening in the classroom community. It was important to these three teachers to be transparent with their students, and when they expressed their emotions and vulnerability honestly, they aligned themselves as co-learners with their students. By sharing their emotions, the teachers put their process of becoming on display and showed students that teachers, too, sometimes struggle as they learn new things and face new challenges. For example, Ms. Smith said, "I'm nowhere near where I need to be and that I want to be. But it's just, I'm in a place where I'm not afraid to try things out, not afraid to, to get it wrong. And then try a differently and, and that's just where I'm at" [Interview 1 Transcript, Part 1, September 2017]. Ms. Smith's acknowledgment of her "need for more learning" and the "long road ahead" aligns with Ms. Martinez's reflection above on teaching as a "constant journey." In addition, like Ms. Barker, Ms. Smith was unafraid to "try things out" and "get it wrong." Ms. Smith often stated that her Whiteness might make her "get it wrong" when working as anti-oppressive educator, but she wanted and needed to take that risk as a critical educator. Based on my analysis, Ms. Martinez, Ms. Smith, and Ms. Barker's journeys exemplified the principles of *becoming* that Freire articulates in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970/2000). For these three teachers, the process of becoming (that is, continuing to learn and act upon their critical sociocultural knowledge) did not occur in isolation, but, rather, in continuous *collaboration* with others, including their students, colleagues, families, and communities, as I will demonstrate throughout this chapter.

Seeking crisis. These three teachers engaged in continuous *becoming* during my time with them, and I also observed that their praxis illustrated a key tenet from Kumashiro's (2000; 2001; 2009) conceptual frame of anti-oppressive education: seeking *crisis* as a way to resist the comfort of *normative* narratives. Kumashiro (2001) explains

that experiencing *crisis* means, "learning to overcome one's desire for the comforting repetition of normative knowledges, identities, and experiences and involves learning to desire the discomforting process of unlearning" (p. 8). An essential component of Ms. Barker, Ms. Martinez, and Ms. Smith's all-encompassing curriculum was to work in community with others in order confront societal inequities at both the macro (e.g., Ms. Smith and Ms. Martinez participating in such protests as the Women's March in January, 2017) and micro levels (e.g., Ms. Barker discussing the implications of race and access to healthcare with her 4th-grade students [October, 2017]). The teachers' involvement and participation in work reflects what Kumashiro (2001) calls "learning to desire the discomforting process of unlearning." By actively showing up, these teachers made space for themselves to continually bear witness to the injustices faced by many in our society. This practice kept them from being comfortable; it kept them alert and aware that there was always more to fight for. Kumashiro (2009) states,

> …and only we ourselves are still struggling with questions about the "what else," "how else," and "where else" that are involved in such teaching. Social justice education requires grappling with paradox, with partiality, and with uncertainty and discomfort that often accompany such commitments. (xxv-xxvi)

The findings in this chapter will illuminate the teachers' ongoing *grappling*. Ms. Smith recognized that her becoming was in large part due to her discomfort:

> And I do feel myself changing and growing through the years, and I'm constantly learning something new about myself and about things that I've assumed, and I, and I wouldn't be where I am right now even though I'm far, far from being where I need to be. I wouldn't be where I am right now if I had just stayed in my comfortable state. [Interview 1 Transcript, Part 2, October 2017]

Ms. Smith recognized that in order to be a critical educator, she could not remain in her "comfortable state," and the process of "constantly learning something new" about herself required her to *unlearn* something simultaneously.

During the semi-structured interviews, Ms. Smith, Ms. Martinez, and Ms. Barker recalled many instances of intentionally seeking crisis in the company of students, parents, colleagues, family, and friends. I coded these moments as examples of when the teachers were developing their critical sociocultural knowledge. I do want to reiterate that because these teachers self-identified as critical educators from the start of this project, they were well-versed in identifying oppression, inequity, and dominant narratives; therefore, their response to *crisis* was part of their praxis (Freire, 1970/2000), and their "unlearning" was something they expected and desired.

Willingness to improvise. One tenet of Brown's theory of humanizing critical sociocultural knowledge (2013) is that in order to approach sociocultural knowledge critically in "fresh and inventive ways" (p. 331), the teacher must be willing to engage in improvisation. She defines *improvisation* as "the process by which the creation of new ways of thinking, practicing and/or acting emerge within the context of an already existing way of approaching or doing something" (p. 331).

In all of the experiences that made up the teachers' all-encompassing curriculum, the teachers were willing to improvise within their "already existing" contexts. In other words, some of the experiences that made up their curriculum were not explicitly or inherently designed for the acquisition of critical sociocultural knowledge; rather, the teachers improvised ways to reimagine their experiences for this purpose. For example, as I will describe later in this chapter, these teachers continued their learning of critical sociocultural knowledge in part by mentoring preservice teachers. The institutions (higher education and public school) do not require cooperating teachers to be critical educators or teach critical sociocultural knowledge to preservice teachers. The institutions want the teachers to be appreciative towards students and be solid in their pedagogy for teaching the grade-level content standards. However, Ms. Barker, Ms.

Martinez, and Ms. Smith took their opportunity as cooperating teachers to advocate for critical pedagogies, and this advocacy demonstrates their willingness to improvise in their role of mentor. These three teachers brought "a new way of thinking" to what it means to mentor preservice teachers, and all three approached their work in their own unique way.

For the remainder of this chapter, I demonstrate how Ms. Martinez, Ms. Barker, and Ms. Smith continually created and engaged in a wide array of all-encompassing experiences both in-and out-of-school to develop their critical sociocultural knowledge in order to sustain and grow critical pedagogies. The next set of findings identifies specific components of this all-encompassing curriculum that supported the teachers in their learning of critical sociocultural knowledge. These findings will be examined across two broad sections: "Sustaining and Growing Critical Pedagogies, In-School Contexts" and "Sustaining and Growing Critical Pedagogies, Out-of-school Contexts." Within each section, additional sub-sections illuminate specific ways in which Ms. Smith, Ms. Barker, and Ms. Martinez navigated both contexts in order to grow and sustain their work as critical educators.

In my analysis, I define *in-school* experiences as those that occurred within participants' official role of teacher for their independent school districts (ISDs). I define *out-of-school* experiences as those that occurred outside of this official role. Table 4.1 below provides examples of each category. Furthermore, in this project, in- and out-of-school do not always refer to the physical space of the school campus where these teachers were employed. In other words, many of the "in-school experiences" took place outside of the physical classroom space. In Table 4.1 below, I present examples of both categories.

Table 4.1*, Examples of In- and Out-of-school Contexts*

In-School	Example	Out-of-school	Example
Classroom work	*Using workshop structure*	Reading for Multiple Perspectives	*Reading and posting on social media about diverse literature*
Professional development/School leadership	*Writing grants for school-wide book club*	Role in family	*Mother of daughters*
Membership in grassroots teacher organizations	*Member of Educators in Solidarity*	Membership with religious organizations	*Baha'i faith*
Collaboration with higher education institutions	*Working as a cooperating teacher*	Political activism: local and national	*Participating in protests (Women's reproductive rights, Black Lives Matter)*

As this table indicates, the *in-school* category refers to experiences in which the teachers' professional identities as teachers were integral and required. For example, I categorized the participants' work as cooperating teachers for multiple local universities as an *in-school* method of sustaining and growing their critical pedagogies because the universities specifically recruited teachers who are employed by local ISDs. In contrast, the *out-of-school* category comprises activities in which participants' professional identities as teachers were not foregrounded, made explicit, or required. For example, as I explained in the *seeking crisis* section, Ms. Smith and Ms. Martinez regularly participated in political protests and marches in their communities.

SUSTAINING AND GROWING CRITICAL PEDAGOGIES, IN-SCHOOL CONTEXTS

As a result of their many years of experience, Ms. Barker, Ms. Smith, and Ms. Martinez were well-versed in how public elementary schools are run, and each had served in a variety of leadership roles in their career. In this section, I describe how these teachers further developed critical sociocultural knowledge in order to sustain and grow their enactment of critical pedagogies in their official capacity as ISD teachers. Within the category of in-school contexts, I report findings in the following areas: a) In the classroom; b) Leadership initiatives in the district; and c) Collaboration with institutions of higher education.

In the Classroom

Within their classrooms, these teachers used two principal methods to sustain and grow their enactment of critical pedagogies: *reflecting on personal vision* and *designing a transformative curriculum for students.*

Reflecting on personal vision. Across the interviews, the three teacher participants often shared components of their personal vision statements with me. In our conversations, they reflected on why they were committed to critical pedagogies and what they often referred to as "social justice." Recently, at a meeting that I was participating in with preservice teachers entering their first year in the university's Professional Development Sequence, a senior faculty member and cohort coordinator told the preservice teachers that in addition to the vision statements of the institutions, each teacher should construct a personal vision statement to sustain them in their work as a change-maker in their district. My conversations with these three veteran teachers affirmed this view. Ms. Smith, Ms. Barker, and Ms. Martinez never referenced their schools' vision statements, but they often spoke of their own personal vision as the impetus for their work as critical educators. The teachers had clear ideas about what they

wanted their students to experience during their time in the classroom and beyond. For example, Ms. Martinez and Ms. Barker's vision was to support their students' development of empathy and a sense of community. Ms. Martinez stated,

> It's very much – my focus is on teaching empathy, teaching to be peaceful. We know that there are other options: war and violence. I don't know why this would be a bad thing. But I am very progressive, and I could see where some people would think that I'm not correct. Being so progressive with children because it's controversial. Yeah. So I'm like, well, life is controversial, and if you don't teach children to problem solve then what's the point of being a teacher? I mean, are you preparing them for a test? Are you preparing them for life? And thinking? And personally, I like to think – I like to be challenged, so I would like to teach my children to think and search for the deeper questions. [Interview 1 Transcript, September 2017]

As Ms. Martinez shared the vision and purpose that guided her work as a critical educator and classroom teacher, she also articulated the tension that surrounds her "controversial" teaching practices. In this reflection, Ms. Martinez did not specify the "some people" who would think she was "not correct," but in past informal conversations, she had named administrators (e.g., her first school principal) and colleagues as people who pushed back on her choice to be "progressive with children." Ms. Martinez made it clear that she works in a state of some discomfort due to her enactment of her vision in the context of school. She explained that she hoped to provide her students space to think and problem-solve through the challenges of life, just as she tries to do in her own life.

Ms. Barker prioritized the socio-emotional health and well-being of her students as part of her personal vision as a critical educator. In her previous school district, Ms. Barker had spent several years providing training for a program called *Tribes* (http://tribes.com/about/), which was designed to foreground social-emotional instruction in school through developing a strong sense of community. She continued to draw upon

this experience as she reflected on her personal vision for her current classroom. Ms. Barker reflected on the importance of trust as her "number one thing":

> I think for me the first thing is to create that community in the classroom and that trust with the students and for the students to not only trust me, but each other. I think it's really important for them to know each other and to feel comfortable to talk to each other and be open. And I think that's, that's the number one thing for me is building that community. And I think from there, everything else just kind of follows that and falls into place. Like, you know, if they feel comfortable and safe and they're going to take risks and they're learning and they're going to be willing to try new things and trying out... I think that that's something that will kind of fall into place if you have that strong foundation. [Interview 1 Transcript, September 2017]

Ms. Barker recognized that trust within the community was essential in order to navigate the discomfort of learning new things. However, beyond the students' learning, Ms. Barker relied on her classroom community as a space for her to also try out new things in her teaching as a critical educator. Within the context of this "strong foundation," for example, Ms. Barker made the decision to read aloud Jason Reynolds's *Ghost* (2016) to her students. Ms. Barker had planned to read a book that she was very familiar with, and then, after reading *Ghost* on her own, she decided that it was important for her to share this book with her students. With this particular book, Ms. Barker's sense of necessity to teach a "variety of cultures" to her students was paired with a sense of explicit uncertainty and discomfort for herself as the teacher. She opened our first meeting after the winter holiday (January, 2018) by reflecting on this experience of reading *Ghost* (2016),

> …but at the same time also making sure I'm exposing the kids to a variety of cultures and things like that. Even a variety of cultures within the United States. Thinking about *Ghost*, especially, I've never read a book that pushes that. I don't know what you call that, but that idea quite as much as *Ghost*. [Interview 2 Transcript, January 2018]

Ms. Barker never completed or named what she felt *Ghost* "pushes," However, later she expressed that it felt uncomfortable for her to bring "a modern day" perspective that centered on the inequities that Ghost (the main character, an African American boy living with his mom in a low-socioeconomic neighborhood) experienced, and this discomfort pushed her to directly name her students' privilege as upper-middle class kids. She stated, "And, see those are things that I haven't really talked about before" [Interview 2, January 2018]. Ms. Barker, in the context of her trusting classroom community, embraced becoming, sought crisis, and improvised through her instruction of *Ghost* (2016). In Chapter Five, I share an example of the resistance and discomfort Ms. Barker had to navigate with a student in response to this book.

In their personal visions and reflections, Ms. Martinez, Ms. Barker, and Ms. Smith each refuted the banking model of education (Freire, 1970/2000) and instead affirmed a vision of students as problem-posers and problem-solvers with each other. These three teachers were thinkers and transformative intellectuals (Giroux, 1985), and they envisioned their students as such. For example, Ms. Smith stated,

> I want them to see how they are connected to others and how their experiences are not the same as other people. Even just with literacy, I don't want them to just read the words, I want them to think critically about the characters… but also like the author, what the author brings to it and their perspective on it. Yeah… And for me as a teacher, I have to accept that because it's not about them feeling the same way I feel, but for them to be able to see other perspectives… I don't want them to feel like they should just go with what that person feels. So voice - student voice, student advocacy, all of those things are really important to me. [Interview 1 Transcript, Part 2, October 2017]

A key theme across the many ideas articulated within Ms. Smith's vision was her desire for students to know how to speak up with their own ideas and voices. In my observations, I observed her say to the children (almost on a daily basis), "We are not bystanders. We are up-standers." In her vision, she hoped that the students in her class

would learn to not immediately accept anyone else's words as truth, but instead, they would learn to critically assess multiple perspectives and "make a choice for themselves." Ms. Smith challenged all voices of authority, including her own; she envisioned herself as a teacher who hands authority back to the students.

Across all three cases, the teachers envisioned building a community of critical thinkers with their students. In these personal visions, the teachers reinforced Freire's (1970/2000) belief that

> From the outset, her efforts must coincide with those of the students to engage in critical thinking and the quest for mutual humanization. His efforts must be imbued with a profound trust in people and their creative power. To achieve this, they must be partners of the students in their relations with them. (p. 75)

It seemed, as I watched them teach across the year, that constructing vision statements served as a form of sustenance for the teachers. When they envisioned students as progressive, trusting each other, having voice, and becoming, then it seemed that constructing the vision for the students' becoming nurtured their own becoming. Reflecting on their personal vision for their students and their classrooms supported the teachers in sustaining and growing their enactment of critical pedagogies. It was through their visions that they articulated the need for critical pedagogies.

Transformative curriculum for students. The critical educators in this study designed an all-encompassing curriculum for themselves that extended beyond in-school contexts; however, they recognized that the pedagogies they enacted with their students was for the most part situated in the formal context of the school classroom. Brown's (2013) theory of humanizing critical sociocultural knowledge is situated in the context of school; therefore, her original notion of sociocultural knowledge as *all-encompassing* refers to the existence of that knowledge in every aspect of school. Returning to Brown's (2013) concept of *all-encompassing*, I found that the teachers actively designed

curriculum that centered school, specifically reading workshop (Bomer & Bomer, 2001), as a space to address sociocultural knowledge with a humanizing and critical approach with students. All three teachers reported that the reading workshop structure enabled them to design classrooms and curricula that were dialogic, student-centered, and aligned with their visions of social justice and transformative learning.

During the first few weeks of school, each teacher named a broad theme for the year that aligned directly with their vision for their students. For example, Ms. Smith's theme was *We are global citizens.* Ms. Martinez's theme was *Being a Peace Maker and Change Maker*, and Ms. Barker's theme was *Each Kindness*. Table 4.2 outlines the thematic units that each teacher developed for reading workshop over the 2017-2018 academic year.

Table 4.2 Teacher-Developed Units of Study for Reading Workshop

	Units of Study in Ms. Smith's Classroom – 3rd grade	Units of Study in Ms. Barker's Classroom – 4th grade	Units of Study in Ms. Martinez's Classroom – 1st grade
August	Same and Different		August: Peace as Change
September	Overview of Types of Discrimination	Unit: Multiple Intelligences (text set of picture books) Empathy and Kindness (*Wonder* by RJ Palacio)	September: Good Citizen
October	Story of Columbus (dominant and counter-narrative) Global Goals (United Nations Project)	Empathy and Kindness (*Wonder* by RJ Palacio)	October: Community
November	Immigration	*Ghost* by Jason Reynolds	November: Immigration and Border Crossing
December	Homelessness, Poverty, and Hunger Inquiry		January: Kindness I was unable to continue to observe in Ms. Martinez's classroom due to the demands of her schedule.
January	Underground Railroad	Unit: Civil Rights	
February	Segregation; Civil Rights (Yesterday and Today)	Unit: Signs and Symbols (Topics addressed: Japanese Internment, Migrant Farm Work, Holocaust, Loss of Mother, Global Poverty, Environmental Well-Being) (Pairing of fiction and nonfiction multimodal texts)	
March	March: Civil Rights (Yesterday and Today)	Signs and Symbols (continued)	
April	April: Women's Rights	Holocaust (*Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry)	
May	May: What is Normal?		

The teachers designed and taught these thematic units for reading workshop over the 2017-2018 academic year. In developing this yearlong plan for instruction, they engaged in praxis as they planned how to teach critical sociocultural knowledge. As is evident from the table, the focus of each unit across all three classrooms, regardless of the age or cultural identities of the students, was on issues of equity and social justice (e.g., *Homelessness, Poverty, and Hunger*). The teachers curated the resources, including text

sets on their own, and they devoted a tremendous amount of time to researching and reading in order to prepare thematic units intended to disrupt the dominant narratives of American society.

According to the teachers, the units were designed to build upon each other in order to demonstrate to the children that all stories are partial (Kumashiro, 2001) and continuous. Ms. Smith would often remind her students that they (both the students and Ms. Smith) would continue to learn about and debate these issues and events throughout their life, indicating to them at some level that all stories are partial and political (Kumashiro, 2001). These teachers' process of designing a transformation curriculum (Banks, 1994) dedicated to foregrounding critical sociocultural knowledge required a tremendous amount of time devoted to reflection, planning, and inquiry. The process of reflection enabled the teachers to (a) recognize and respond to all stories as partial and political, and/or (b) move beyond cursory "add-on" efforts to achieve a more meaningful sense of inclusion. The teachers also had to consider how they would present this content to young children in the classroom; this was not an easy task, and it required them to develop their own discourse on these issues in honest, sophisticated, and safe ways. Ms. Smith addressed this challenge:

> But I find that even by third grade they [student] haven't had a conversation about what does it mean that we're different colors. You know, what does it mean that, you know, that I'm a boy and you are a girl… but they don't, they don't, they don't have the tools to really even have those conversations I don't think at a third grade level because that's not something that has been normalized for them… I think you've been there for some of the, um, you know, kids saying things that um, you know, that are hurtful and stereotypical and very much echo what is being said by adults right now in our society... I think a lot of the fall is just really having a lot of conversations and helping them to see that there's not just one answer, there's not just one, right, that there are many different sides to issues. [Interview 2 Transcript, December 2018]

As Ms. Smith stated, for many of the students across these three classrooms, this content was new, and it was up to her and Ms. Martinez and Ms. Barker as critical educators to figure out how to introduce it in ways that were not "hurtful and stereotypical" and were built on multiple perspectives.

In their work as critical educators, these teachers embraced partiality, and they intentionally designed each yearlong curriculum to serve as an unfinished (partial) story. An intentional consequence of these teacher-developed thematic units was that the teachers were committed to participating in dialogue that centered on critical sociocultural knowledge with their students each day during reading workshop and the daily read aloud. Returning to Freire's (1970/2000) principle of praxis and becoming, Ms. Smith, Ms. Barker, and Ms. Martinez were becoming in the company of their students as a result of structuring their literacy instruction as workshop and developing a yearlong curriculum that was grounded in critical sociocultural knowledge. With these structures in place, they created daily opportunities for praxis as critical educators, which gave them ample in-school opportunities to sustain and grow their enactment of critical pedagogies.

My analysis indicated that the teachers' efforts in planning ahead enabled them to also prepare mentally, physically, and emotionally for the improvisation that would be required when (un)expected moments of crisis emerged. For instance, as I shared previously, by bringing in *Ghost* (2016), Ms. Barker challenged and disrupted herself, and she also expected that it would challenge the students' sociocultural knowledge. She sought crisis for herself when she decided to read *Ghost* to the students. In *Ghost*, Ms. Barker had found a text that could serve as a tool to bring new types of critical conversations to the fourth grade students in her class. Ms. Barker was willing to change her tools when she felt she had found a better tool that would disrupt dominant narratives

about poverty, family, and race. These critical educators positioned their knowledge and pedagogy as dynamic, and therefore, they did not believe their curriculum for their students could be fixed. Ms. Smith, Ms. Barker, and Ms. Martinez kept learning themselves in order to keep teaching for critical education.

Leadership Initiatives in the District

Over the years, Ms. Smith, Ms. Barker, and Ms. Martinez had served in numerous leadership roles for their respective school districts, including as team leaders, demonstration classroom leaders, and district-level professional development leaders. During the interviews, each teacher described multiple ongoing experiences that illuminated their commitment to supporting their colleagues and school community as a whole toward embracing anti-oppressive and culturally relevant educational frameworks. These leadership experiences offered additional opportunities for the teachers to sustain and grow their own understandings of critical pedagogies; and this process of growing and sustaining often involved experiencing discomfort, vulnerability, and tensions within the teachers' professional communities.

All three teachers led professional development for their respective districts, and Ms. Smith and Ms. Martinez, in their role as classroom teachers, had also taken the initiative over the years to write grants for their schools. At the time of the study, both teachers had received grant funding to support their school as a whole with a number of initiatives that centered on developing a more culturally relevant and equitable environment for the teachers and students. In this section, I present examples of the teachers learning and growing as a result of their participation in leadership initiatives. These examples include Ms. Barker's work as a mentor-writing teacher to teachers, Ms. Smith's role as book club leader and grant recipient, and Ms. Martinez coordinating a

keynote address by an African American teacher who teaches in the Austin Freedom School Program for the faculty in her school.

During the 2017-2018 academic year, Ms. Barker was asked to be a mentor writing teacher by the English Language Arts department of her school district. Ms. Barker hosted teachers from the district in her classroom once a month to observe her writing instruction with students, and then she provided direct support to the visiting teachers as they planned their own writing instruction for the upcoming weeks. Ms. Barker explained that during these visits, the observing teachers spent a great deal of time inquiring into the resources she used to develop her own writing curriculum. In these exchanges, Ms. Barker had to deconstruct her thinking and offer a rationale for the writing curriculum she had designed for her students. Ms. Barker's writing instruction was aligned with her reading instruction, and she turned to multicultural children's literature to serve as mentor texts for her writing instruction. In her role as mentor to the visiting teachers, Ms. Barker emphasized the importance of drawing on culturally responsive resources and developing a curriculum that inquired into social justice issues. She believed it was powerful for the teachers to first experience her lessons with the students and observe the classroom, and then engage in dialogue about their methods for teaching writing [Interview 4, June 2018]. Ms. Barker took this opportunity to mentor teachers towards social justice and culturally responsive pedagogies, which provided her another opportunity to engage in praxis with colleagues on her work as a critical educator.

During the 2016-2017 academic year, Ms. Smith and a number of colleagues from across the district joined together to write a proposal to fund a district-wide book club on Zaretta Hammond's book *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain* (2014). Ms. Smith was the campus leader at her school, and each faculty member received a copy of

the book, attended professional development sessions with Ms. Hammond, and participated in monthly book club meetings. Ms. Smith explained,

> I have to be careful about stuff because for some people they know that I pushed the envelope and they are resistant to that because they think it's just me. They don't see that it's a bigger picture, that it's a societal thing. So I don't know. So there's some different dynamics that I have to be careful with… And maybe even like with the stuff that we're doing with the book study, I'm very cautious about the part I play and um, and the things that I say in my whole group setting, um, because I don't want to sabotage the book study because of it, you know what I mean? [Interview 1 Transcript, Part 2, October 2017].

Ms. Smith wrote this grant as a form of activism within the context of school. She reported that most of the faculty were excited to learn together and were generally appreciative of her efforts to bring this opportunity to their campus; however, at the same time, Ms. Smith thought it was important that she was not the sole driving force behind every book club meeting. In this instance, and many others across the year, Ms. Smith intentionally positioned herself in discomfort in order to take action for what she hoped was the greater good of the school. She shared that it was likely that her colleagues were annoyed because this meant more work for them—or because, as she said, they did not believe racism or inequity was a problem at *their* school [Interview 1, Part 2, October 2017]. Many of the teachers referred to the project as "Jenna's book study," and that made Ms. Smith incredibly uncomfortable. She shared,

> I had to talk to administrators and say, "This is not about me. We have, you know, like as a campus, we need to figure out why we want to be a part of this and why we want to read this book and how, how is this going to help us move forward in helping kids and to get unstuck from some places that were at?" Because that's our motivation to do it. [Interview 1 Transcript, Part 2, October 2017]

This challenging experience prompted Ms. Smith to consider how to navigate her role as a visible critical educator in the context of school. Ms. Smith believed that she was an anomaly among her colleagues due to her understanding that in order to grow as a

critical educator, she had to, in some ways, live in a state of crisis (Kumashiro, 2001). At the same time, she knew that this was a process she had embarked upon on her own, and she did not want to be a heavy-handed colleague. She expressed the difficulty of balancing the need to keep speaking up with the need to let her peers find their own paths towards justice. Throughout the year, Ms. Smith's grappling supported her growth as a critical educator.

Ms. Martinez focused her grant writing efforts on providing opportunities for the students. As part of a grant initiative during the time of the study, Ms. Martinez had received resources to offer an after-school writing club for first through fifth grade. As a critical educator, Ms. Martinez believed that every child has a unique perspective and story to tell. Parents were invited to participate [Interview 2, January 7, 2018] in the after-school writing club and be part of their students' literacy experiences in a school context. Ms. Martinez was committed to supporting families and making parents feel welcome in the context of school, especially since she personally understood from her own childhood experiences how unwelcoming school could be towards diverse communities, particularly Spanish-speaking families [Interview 2, January 7, 2018]. Ms. Martinez explained to me that when parents come to her Writers' Club, she learned from them about the conversations they were having at home with their children on such issues as immigration and school, and in response, she could make pedagogical decisions that supported her students and their parents.

> I want to teach in a way that's relevant to our lives and relates to current events and the border wall going up is his current events and then there are little children and they might hear their parents fears, so I want to have them give them a space [the classroom] to discuss these concerns they might have or even misconceptions they might have. [Ms. Martinez, Interview 2 Transcript, January 7, 2018]

In addition to the after-school writing club, Ms. Martinez often arranged for guest speakers to visit the campus to speak to the students, teachers, and community, and the school often paid these speakers with the grant money Ms. Garcia had secured. For example, she organized a keynote address for the faculty at her elementary school by a local teacher, an African American man, who taught in the local Freedom School program during the summer, during the back to school professional development. She hoped that his stories would inform and expand her colleagues' knowledge about current issues in the Black community.

Collaboration with Institutions of Higher Education

Ms. Martinez, Ms. Barker, and Ms. Smith had close relationships with faculty at local universities, and they worked formally and informally to support teacher educators in preparing preservice teachers towards critical pedagogies. I identified two main ways teachers collaborated with higher education institutions: by mentoring preservice teachers and by participating in research.

Mentoring preservice teachers. These teachers sustained and grew their critical pedagogies in the in-school context by serving as cooperating teachers for local universities. Ms. Smith, Ms. Barker, and Ms. Martinez often had more than one intern working in their classroom. It was evident from the invitations from the university faculty that these three teachers were considered leaders and strong mentors for novice teachers by faculty at the local universities—and furthermore, these teachers were willing to do the additional work to support future teachers for very little financial reimbursement. In addition to being elementary classroom teachers, Ms. Martinez, Ms. Barker, and Ms. Smith served as teacher educators. The mentor/mentee relationships that they fostered with university faculty and future teachers became one way to sustain and grow their enactment of critical pedagogies.

A PhD candidate and instructor at the flagship university, Ms. Barker's alma mater, asked Ms. Barker if she would be willing to host the Reading Cohort during their Intern II semester [Fall 2017]. The preservice teachers visited her classroom multiple times during this semester; they first visited as a whole group with the instructor, and then many of them returned for further observations in small groups. The preservice teachers observed Ms. Barker as she taught reading and writing workshops (Bomer & Bomer, 2001). The instructor, Ms. Barker's former teaching partner, sought Ms. Barker as a partner in her work because she knew that they were both committed to literacy instruction from a social justice perspective. Ms. Barker had not returned to pursue her Master's by this time, but this colleague and teaching partner had continued to go to school, and their friendship and collaboration offered Ms. Barker a way to keep learning. Ms. Barker shared:

> [She had the] same type of teaching philosophy that I did and she was really also very passionate about reading and social justice and, you know, with her going through school, getting her Master's and then her Administration degree during that time it was really cool because then I was kind of like going to the school of [Name of Colleague]. She would share all of the amazing theory that she was studying, and so I was able to develop as a teacher that way too. And, and I think like having her was really good because, you know, there's always like that you have to push against the grain and go against the grain and do what's right for the kids. [Interview 1 Transcript, September 2017]

Throughout the semester, Ms. Barker hosted the preservice teachers from her colleague's class. For the preservice teachers, Ms. Barker's pedagogy brought to life what they were learning in their Reading Methods course about workshop, student agency, and social justice. Ms. Barker saw this as an opportunity to continue to grow her own knowledge through dialogue with the interns and with her colleague. Through this opportunity, she continued to "develop" into a teacher who "pushes against the grain" while simultaneously making critical pedagogies visible to the intern teachers. The interns were

already reading about, being taught, and expected to embrace critical approaches in the context of their university coursework; however, in Ms. Barker's classroom, they could see these approaches in action and begin to imagine their own possibilities as emerging critical educators. Ms. Barker and her former partner teacher continued learning from each other in this new arrangement as collaborators in teacher education. When Ms. Barker's colleague chose her as a demonstration teacher for the preservice teachers, this choice validated Ms. Barker's stance and methods as a critical educator, thereby sustaining her work in the context of school.

It was challenging to keep up with all of the preservice teachers who visited Ms. Martinez from the local university during the 2017-2018 academic year. She was clearly heralded as a celebrity teacher in the College of Education, and students from all programs (e.g., math, science, literacy, social studies, and bilingual education) requested to visit her class. Many times, while I was visiting Ms. Martinez, there would be a number of preservice teachers in her classroom, and she was always very gracious and welcoming to us all. In interview two, Ms. Martinez shared,

> A lot of college students come into my classroom, like we just had some drama students, as we are about to have some more come from the University. They are future bilingual teachers. In the past years, for like three years in a row, I have had about 20 students come in for five weeks who were learning ESL practices. [Interview 2 Transcript, January 2018]

Ms. Martinez often did a tremendous amount of extra work to open her classroom to these visits as a favor to colleagues at the university. Ms. Martinez responded to these requests for visits with a sincere sense of responsibility, knowing that what she had to offer in addition to her years of experience in the public school system was her insight on how to teach for equity, social justice, and the rights of all children across content areas. In addition to having many visitors in the classroom, Ms. Martinez was often asked to

teach as a guest speaker with faculty at the local university. After one of her talks in Spring 2018 on teaching social studies critically, Ms. Martinez shared that, surprisingly, only one student had a question. It was, she recalled, "Do you ever get in trouble?" She remembered responding,

> And, I'm like, yeah, people ask me that all the time. Yes, I get in trouble, but I cover… I told him how I cover my bases. Like when I was in XISD, I actually would send out a letter to the parents stating that I am a social justice educator. This means that I talk a lot about nonviolence. You know, I am for equality and anti-racism. Do you have a problem or a question with this? Come and talk to me. And the parents, no one ever, no one ever asked me anything. [Interview 3 Transcript, May 2018]

Across these experiences with faculty and preservice teachers, Ms. Martinez foregrounded her identity as a social justice educator.

At the time of the project, Ms. Smith was serving as a cooperating teacher to a preservice teacher from the reading cohort for the entire academic year. Ms. Smith and the intern, Cadence, attended the same university, and many of Cadence's professors were also Ms. Smith's professors. Cadence, a Vietnamese-American woman, was invested in being a critical/social justice educator, and this was one of the reasons she was paired with Ms. Smith. Across all four interviews, Ms. Smith positioned Cadence as a partner-teacher in her classroom, and she often reflected about their co-teaching and the students' responses. For example, in the early part of the spring semester, Cadence was leading a series of lesson on poetry, specifically poetry written by African American poets. When she shared a poem by Langston Hughes, she read the word "Negro," and during the whole-class discussion the students were referring to African Americans as "Negroes" because it was the word Langston Hughes used in his writing. Ms. Smith recalled,

> In her talking about the poem, she used the word "Negro," and then the kids started using that word too as they were explaining the poem. And I just kind of had to stop and say, "Can you remind them of the context of that word, and what we know about that word when we hear it, and how we use it, and how we don't use it?" So, she kind of got it back on track, and then you know, the conversation went on. Then she did the same lesson in the afternoon. So, in-between the morning and the afternoon we did a post-conference, and we talked through that and kind of processed how it got to that point - and what are the teacher moves and different ways of navigating, you know? So, the afternoon session was much different, and they really were able to dive into the meaning of the poem in a different way than the morning group because there was this word being thrown around, you know, and it really went… Anyway. [Interview 2 Transcript, December 2017]

It was evident to me that Ms. Smith remained uncomfortable as she recalled this moment of teaching and learning with Cadence. I learned during my time with Ms. Smith that she often ended her talk with "anyway." This turn of phrase suggested that she was not yet finished reflecting on a topic or event, and she was not yet ready to share any other thoughts on it. Ms. Smith was upset that the word *Negro* "was being thrown around" in the classroom for many reasons. Her choice of words in describing how the kids were using the word and how Cadence allowed them to use it as "thrown around" expressed her own upset at the lack of awareness that had occurred. Furthermore, despite Ms. Smith's own discomfort, she had to work through it in the moment and serve as a steady mentor to Cadence and the children. While Cadence taught, Ms. Smith listened and supported Cadence and the students every step of the way, because the work was too important and consequential to leave unattended. Moreover, she recognized that Cadence, like her, was also in the process of *becoming* (Freire, 1970/2000). Through her mentorship, Ms. Smith pushed herself to keep learning through praxis.

For all three inservice teachers, the experiences of working with preservice teachers (PTs) positioned them in the role of mentor. They each seized this opportunity to engage in problem-posing/problem-solving with their preservice teachers. In these

relationships, although they were the classroom teachers (and from the perspectives of the PTs, they were the experts), as critical educators they shared the roles of teacher and student with their preservice teachers. Therefore, they cultivated a dialogic relationship with their PTs, enabling them to reflect about the content of their curriculum—specifically about the political nature of their read alouds and classroom discussions. For Ms. Martinez, Ms. Barker, and Ms. Smith, these dialogues with preservice teachers offered an opportunity to learn more about enacting critical pedagogies.

Participation in research. Our interviews and informal conversations [Field Notes] over the academic year revealed that each of these teachers was engaging in collaborative work with faculty at local universities. Their choice to participate in my own study exemplifies this engagement. This participation was certainly not a requirement for Ms. Martinez, Ms. Barker, or Ms. Smith. I had reached out to them and shared my area of inquiry, and each of them welcomed me into their classroom for an entire academic year. Teachers' plates are full with the requirements and demands of working at a public school (e.g., paperwork, standardized testing pressures, large class sizes, and limited professional support), yet these teachers were willing to commit to working with me in order to pursue their own growth as critical educators, as well as to contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the field of literacy instruction and critical pedagogies. In our first interview, Ms. Barker explained how her involvement in the project supported the growth of her critical pedagogies by helping her become more reflective about her choices as a teacher: "I feel like I'm already kind of mindful about, you know, those books that I'm selecting and things like that, but it helps me be even more mindful to, you know, make sure that I'm doing a variety of genres, but at the same time also making sure I'm exposing the kids to already have cultures and things like that" [Barker, Interview 1 Transcript, September 2017]. As we spent time together, the

participants stated that they had agreed to work with me on this project because they believed that our work together would give them further opportunity to reflect on their practice as social justice or critical educators. Ms. Smith expressed that this collaboration would give her the space to think deeply:

> Thank you. That's a friendship and partnership and I feel really grateful that I have you to bounce ideas off of and to reflect with and also just to kind of share… I don't have a lot of people that I can go in depth like that with unfortunately at. I'm at my school… So, I appreciate the opportunity to do that. So thank you. And um, and on a personal note, I feel like I've known you for so long and that even after your study is done, I know that we will continue to be friends or at least I hope we will be anyway. [Interview 2 Transcript, December 2017]

I continue to feel grateful that Ms. Smith trusted me as a colleague and friend, and similar to the feelings that Ms. Barker shared about the importance of fostering trust in the learning community, I understood in this exchange that Ms. Smith was expressing a sense of trust between us. She perceived me as a friend, and since it was essential to me to position myself most often as the student in my relationships with the teachers, I felt relieved that Ms. Smith did not regard me as another person who would judge her. She felt a sense of solidarity with me, and that was my intention.

During our year together, I suggested the possibility of presenting at conferences and writing together about their work as critical educators, and they all found this idea appealing. In fact, we did collaborate on a panel session conference proposal in Spring 2018 on enacting critical pedagogies, and the proposal was accepted. The teacher participants did not know each other before I introduced them, and now they keep in touch with each other as a small cohort of critical, elementary, literacy educators. Ms. Barker, Ms. Martinez, Ms. Smith and I presented part of this project in the Fall 2018 at a national literacy conference, and I know that this was a new experience for all of them; they described it as a game-changer for them as critical educators. The following excerpts

from the email exchange following the conference illustrates the impact of this experience:

> Ms. Barker: So thankful to be part of this work with all of you amazing educators!
>
> Ms. Smith: Than YOU, Saba! The work you are doing is important and necessary and I feel so thankful that I was able to be there this weekend to learn with and from all of you!
>
> Ms. Martinez: And I have to thank all of you!!!! Saba, if you got my text message, Gracias! for inviting me! I really was in Teacher Heaven! Felt like an amazing intellectual vacation. I enjoyed meeting everyone but wished we had more time to just talk…as a Baha'i myself, it is my faith that pushes me the most to do what I do.
>
> Happy Thanksgiving to all, a holiday made "official" by Abraham Lincoln during Civil War times, and now history seems to repeat itself--so much to ponder, imagine, do do do and hope for!
>
> [Emails to Saba from Ms. Barker, Ms. Smith, and Ms. Martinez, November 2018]

This experience helped Ms. Martinez, Ms. Barker, and Ms. Smith to see the possibilities of who their audience could be, beyond the borders of our city and state. More recently, in Spring 2019, we all collaborated again to submit a number of proposals to a national literacy conference that will take place in Fall 2019. As a result, the teachers have found a larger community of teachers and teacher educators with whom to engage in continued learning about issues of literacy teaching and anti-oppressive education.

Summary: In-School Contexts

Ms. Martinez, Ms. Smith, and Ms. Barker developed their critical sociocultural knowledge through experiences centered in the classroom, through leadership initiatives, and in collaboration with higher education institutions. The teachers embraced numerous opportunities to learn critical sociocultural knowledge and engage in reflective praxis as they designed curricula for students and for preservice teachers. As the examples presented above indicate, the teachers often experienced crisis, yet, at the same time, they

also experienced personal and professional validation—sometimes as a result of their crisis. It is important to remember that the experiences and curriculum that occurred in the in-school contexts were always directly affiliated with either the public school institution, higher education institution, or both. And with these affiliations, there are implicit constraints at work in order to maintain the dominant narratives (Apple, 1990/2004; Leonardo, 2009). For example, these teachers engaged in many similar roles as advocates for critical pedagogies (e.g., cooperating teachers, professional development leaders), and these roles came with some expectations from the districts and universities. However, despite these constraints, the teachers carved a path that enabled them to lead themselves and other teachers toward new levels of critical sociocultural knowledge and critical pedagogies.

SUSTAINING AND GROWING CRITICAL PEDAGOGIES, OUT-OF-SCHOOL CONTEXTS

In addition to the multiple ways these three teachers worked to sustain and grow their enactment of critical pedagogies within school (that is, in their professional capacity as XISD teachers), analysis revealed several ways in which these teachers also sustained and grew their critical pedagogies in out-of-school contexts. I argue in this section that it was in these out-of-school contexts that the teachers were able to push through the barriers of the institutions—and thus, in some ways, push through the constructs of Whiteness which are inherent in both public school and higher education contexts (Apple, 1990/2004; Leonardo, 2009). Ms. Smith explained how her learning of critical sociocultural knowledge outside of school informed her awareness of oppression in school as a result of the dominant narrative. She reported,

> And, I don't know, there's a lot of different groups and people that I've been learning from [out-of-school contexts (e.g., grassroots organizations, online groups)], and slowly, like in my classroom starting to notice that, “Okay, wow.” I

> started being aware more of people of color on my campus and how like the parents and students because some of the parents, some of the people in the dinner group were people of color on my campus. That's how I knew, you know, people, and so I'd hear their experiences, and when I start to look for it because we naturally kind of talked about their experience in relation to Coyote Elementary and started to notice things that I hadn't even been aware of before… And just in the ways that I interacted with kids in my classroom and our content and I mean I started to notice that everywhere. [Interview 2 Transcript, January 2018]

In this particular exchange, Ms. Smith was aware that she was learning in a variety of out-of-school contexts. Specifically, she reported that she was "learning", "aware more," and "started to notice things." In addition, I was struck by Ms. Smith's articulation of her discomfort as she was learning in these out-of-school contexts. In the middle of her share, she inserted "Okay, wow," and she concluded her reporting by admitting that things she had never noticed due to the hegemony of school were now starting to show up "everywhere" at her school. I considered reflections like this one as examples of crisis (Kunashiro, 2001) – moments where Ms. Smith was engaged in the process of working through her unlearning.

In addition to connecting with their communities in person, these educators drew on and reached out to their communities via social media. I was connected with all three of the teachers through Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Ms. Martinez chose to only have a Facebook account, while Ms. Barker and Ms. Smith had accounts on all three platforms. By following them on social media, I observed the breadth of their experiences as critical educators in out-of-school contexts. Throughout this section, I will present images and texts from their social media posts in order to highlight moments in which they sustained and grew their critical pedagogies out-of-school. This section explores three key ways in which these teachers sustained and grew their critical pedagogies outside of school contexts: through *personal reading of multicultural literature*, *participating in community activism*, and *being mothers*.

Personal Reading of Multicultural Literature

In the previous section under the heading of *Classroom Work*, I shared the all-encompassing approach Ms. Barker, Ms. Martinez, and Ms. Smith took to developing a year-long curriculum in reading workshop that focused on promoting multiple perspectives, social justice, and equity. In order to develop this all-encompassing curriculum, these three teachers relied on multicultural children's literature, often composed by authors and illustrators of color, as the primary resource to extend their learning of critical sociocultural knowledge each day with their students. The teachers selected each text to read aloud and curated text sets for each thematic unit. I learned from my own daily conversations with the teachers that in order to have these resources readily available in their classrooms, each teacher spent a great amount of their personal time outside of school reading adult, young adult, and picture books in order to consider the scope and sequence of the work they hoped to do with students.

I understood the teachers' personal reading of multicultural literature for the purpose of sustaining and growing their enactment of critical pedagogies as a direct nod to Kumashiro's (2001) warning that our partial knowledge is often "(mis)knowledge," which is given to us and perpetuated by the dominant narratives in this society. By frequently reading work composed by people from diverse backgrounds, the teachers were simultaneously acknowledging and continuously disrupting a pull towards the common-sense understandings of how things should be according to White people in power. Although these teachers were already critical of White-dominated canon well before this project began, they embraced the need to keep paying attention to the existence of the dominant narrative. Kumashiro (2001) writes,

> Perhaps most commonly critiqued for teaching partial materials are English classrooms that insist on teaching the "canon." Biases based on class, race,

> gender, sexuality, and other social markers often play out in the curriculum when the authors and characters of the literature being read consist primarily of middle class or wealthy, White, male, and heterosexual people [Palumbo- Liu, 1995; Schmitz, Rosenfelt, Butler, & Guy-Sheftall, 1995; Sumara, 1993]. By learning about only certain groups and perspectives in society, students are not learning about alternative perspectives and the contributions, experiences, and identities of Others, and by not learning such knowledge, students are not troubling the (mis)knowledge they already have. Silence and exclusion are significant parts of the "hidden curriculum" [Jackson, 1968; Jackson, Boostrom, & Hanson, 1993] being taught in schools—a hidden curriculum that sanctions the partial and oppressive knowledges already in schools and society. (p. 5)

Although Kumashiro is referring to K-12 students in this passage, I have argued throughout this chapter that Ms. Martinez, Ms. Barker, and Ms. Smith positioned themselves as both teachers and students; therefore, their critical teacher mindset helped them realize for themselves that they had a responsibility to "trouble the (mis)knowledge they already have."

I categorized this method of sustaining and growing their enactment of critical pedagogies as an out-of-school practice because analysis indicated that this reading went beyond the purpose of the classroom, even though it informed their daily work as teachers. It was important to the teachers to continually immerse themselves in multicultural literature for two reasons. First, this literature served as a source of knowledge for them as critical educators. Second, it was the primary tool they used to teach critical sociocultural knowledge to their students. Therefore, the teachers felt a strong responsibility to keep abreast of what was new and possible in the world of multicultural literature. This particular finding was obvious, yet at the same time, surprising to me. Analysis indicated that the teachers' voracious reading of multicultural literature was a form of activism. For Ms. Barker, Ms. Smith, and Ms. Martinez, this endeavor that they took upon themselves outside of school, in their personal time, served as the foundation for much of their work as critical educators in the context of school.

With this practice, the critical educators were reading the word and the world (Freire, 1970/2000). Reading this way kept them open to multiple perspectives offered by people of the world and the students in their classrooms. It supported them with new ideas and perspectives as they took action and worked toward transformative pedagogical practices.

Based on our conversations, it was evident that Ms. Barker read one to two new books each week at home, and she, and Ms. Martinez and Ms. Smith, sought books particularly by authors of color in order to consider different perspectives. In the table below, I share images from Ms. Barker's Instagram feed. She chose to post images of young adult multicultural literature often in order to advocate the stories and voices of the characters. It is important to note that much of what Ms. Barker read outside of school was not directly incorporated into her classroom curriculum.

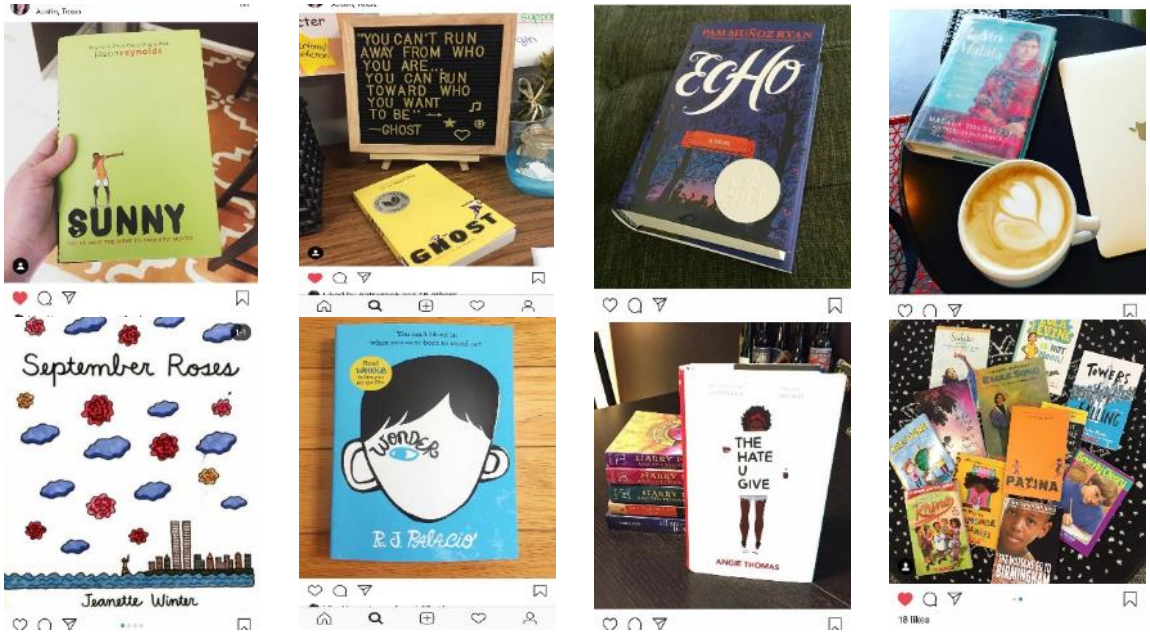


Figure 4.1. Ms. Barker's Instagram posts featuring and recommending diverse literature.

Ms. Barker made the decision to share these texts with diverse perspectives publicly. She knew that on Instagram, her audience extended beyond public school, and

she hoped that friends and family would pause and inquire into the books, characters, and authors. By sharing these titles publicly, Ms. Barker showed both in and out-of-school communities her stance as someone who supported Black Lives Matter and advocated for the rights of Muslims, immigrants, people with (dis)abilities, and much more.

During our time together, Ms. Smith, Martinez, and Ms. Barker attended events such as The Texas Book Festival in order to hear authors from diverse backgrounds speak about their books and share their stories. Ms. Smith, for example, attended a conference to hear Robin DiAngelo, author of *White Fragility* (2018), speak in November 2017. Afterwards, she posted the following message on her Facebook page:

> "What we profess to value, we so very rarely put into practice." –Robin DiAngelo
>
> Zoom in. Reflect. Are you putting into practice in your real life, the things you profess to value? To be honest, I struggle with aspects of my life that don't align with my beliefs. I live in a segregated city. We chose our neighborhood because it was "safe" and has "good" schools, which also means that it is predominantly white. Our kids go to the same privileged school where I teach. So do we move? Do I teach somewhere else? Would doing that make a difference or add to the current problems CITY is experiencing due to the gentrification? I don't know what the answers are, but I'm working to figure it out. [Ms. Smith, Facebook, November 2017]

She engaged in a cycle of praxis with this text. Ms. Smith read the book—reflection. She attended a conference presentation on Whiteness with her husband—action. Then she continued on her journey of becoming with a public post—reflection. Ms. Smith's post was full of questions that she was asking herself. She expressed publicly in this post that she "did not know what the answers are, but [she was] working to figure it out." In this post, Ms. Smith grappled with segregation as a macro- and micro-level [Erickson, 2004] issue in her life. She admitted here that although she does not support segregated communities, she believed that she and her family had perpetuated the phenomenon by choosing to live in their current neighborhood. This, I imagine, was

painful for Ms. Smith to admit to the world, yet that was exactly what she did. Ms. Smith did not associate her process of unlearning with anger or hopelessness; instead, she owned her role in the problem, and that was what gave her hope to be someone who could then be part of a solution. Ms. Smith, Ms. Barker, and Ms. Martinez dedicated ample time to reading and learning. Just as they developed an all-encompassing curriculum that drew heavily on diverse literature for their students, they each developed a curriculum for their own learning outside of their classrooms by making the commitment to read, consider, reflect, and act on perspectives and stories that differed from their own. In doing so, they fostered a dynamic sense of critical sociocultural knowledge and what it meant to be critical educators.

In the next two sections, *community and activism* and *being mothers,* I focus primarily on Ms. Smith and Ms. Martinez's efforts to sustain and grow their enactment of critical pedagogies in out-of-school contexts. In my analysis, these themes came up during interviews, as well as in many informal conversations throughout the year between myself and Ms. Smith or Ms. Martinez. However, Ms. Barker did not mention these out-of-school experiences as part of her work to further develop her enactment of critical pedagogies. As I learned about these experiences with Ms. Smith and Ms. Martinez, I would always inquire with Ms. Barker about any additional out-of-school experiences she was having. Ultimately, though, most of Ms. Barker's reflections on her development were closely connected to her work as a teacher. Later, I will explain how I made sense of Ms. Barker's path compared to Ms. Martinez and Ms. Smith's and explore the implications of this difference.

Community and Activism

During this project, I learned a great deal about the ways in which Ms. Barker, Ms. Martinez, and Ms. Smith spent their time outside of school. I learned, especially for

Ms. Smith and Ms. Martinez, that much of their time out-of-school was intentionally spent on work that supported the growth of their critical pedagogies. This work made up of much of their social time. For example, when I would ask either of them what they did over the weekend, Ms. Martinez and Ms. Smith regularly participated in some experience (in or out-of-school) that was directly related to their work as critical educators (e.g., attending a protest, talk, meeting, or church event – see images below). Scholarship (e.g., Picower, 2012; Urrieta, 2007) in this area suggests these out-of school contexts, these "alternative sites of learning" (Montaño, Lopez-Torres, De Lissovoy, Pacheco, & Stillman, 2002),

> …were central to the acquisition of skills and knowledge necessary for these teacher activists to effect change… they learned to transfer new information, skills, or knowledge they acquired while participating in the activist organizations directly to the classroom in the form of critical pedagogical approaches. (p. 271)

I was in awe of their commitment to this work during their weekends and holidays, when many of these events occurred. In other words, I learned that Ms. Smith and Ms. Martinez rarely took time off from their pursuit of critical sociocultural knowledge; it seemed that the majority of their social life at this time was focused on this endeavor. Similar to the findings in Montaño et. al. (2002), Ms. Smith and Ms. Martinez considered their out-of-school activism to directly impact their in-school pedagogy.

Ms. Martinez, November 2017: *Finally got to go see Esperanza Peace Center. Good seeing high school buddies, too.*

Ms. Smith, November 2017: *If you are a womayn of the global majority, this is the place to be next weekend. I'll be volunteering in the morning attending a few sessions as a co-conspirator.*

Figure 4.2. Participation in activism: Ms. Martinez and Ms. Smith's Facebook pages.

Highlights from Ms. Martinez's life in community as an activist. Ms. Martinez held multiple leadership roles in her community projects. She was a founder and leader in her local cinema club. During many conversations [Field notes and memos], I learned that Ms. Martinez had dreamed up this club for two purposes: 1) to bring multiple perspectives through film to her community broadly; and 2) to involve young people (K-12) in learning about culture, diversity, history, and politics through film and writing. The cinema club foregrounded obscure and independent art films, and they centered the work of people of color. In addition to her other ways of bringing the community together, Ms. Martinez would often bridge her in school and out-of-school contexts through the cinema club. For example, the cinema club held a showing of Disney and Pixar's film *Coco* (2017) in the Spring of 2018. In addition, Ms. Martinez, using money raised by the cinema club as well as a grant that she wrote for this project, hosted a writing contest for

K-12 students in her district to reflect on their culture. During an interview in the spring, as Ms. Martinez described this project to me, I asked her if anyone from the ISD ever thanked her for her work, and she simply answered, "No" [Interview 3, May 2018].

Ms. Martinez often cited her Baha'i spirituality and identity as the impetus for her work as a critical educator. Early in the project, June 2017, Ms. Martinez invited me to join her for a Racial Unity celebration organized by the local Baha'i congregation, Lutheran Church, and Universalist Unitarian congregation. Her faith was the core of her critical sociocultural knowledge. Ms. Martinez explained the Baha'i faith to me as

> A life of service… Our worship is done through service. It is more about action. It is not easy being a Baha'i. It is not easy being good- look at our broken world. What is a Baha'i ? To be a Baha'i simply means to love all of the world—to serve and to work for universal peace and brotherhood. [Interview 2 Transcript, December 2017]

For Ms. Martinez, both as a Baha'i and as a critical educator, the principle of action, as well as the principle of crisis, guided her work in and out-of-school. And for Ms. Martinez, these two contexts and identities were blurred into each other. She was never a critical educator without being a Baha'i. I learned about the Baha'i faith from Ms. Martinez, and I learned there was a strong component of social justice embedded throughout the faith. She shared,

> It is easy to love people who are just like you. It is easy to love people who are pleasant and have the same interests. It is not easy to love people who are different—maybe from a different race, different culture, a different economic level. That is why it is not easy to be a Baha'i. We need to get out of our comfort zones. If we get out of our boxes, I think it can happen and our world needs it more than ever. [Interview 2 Transcript, December 2017]

I witnessed Ms. Martinez striving to love all those around her, and in her pursuit of a just world, Ms. Martinez gave love even when she did not receive it in return—as was often the case with her administrators and colleagues. But, for Ms. Martinez, the work was a

necessity for her as a Baha'i. In Chapter Five, I describe how Ms. Martinez also looked through the lens of her faith when teaching for social justice in her first-grade classroom.

Highlights from Ms. Smith's life in community as an activist. Ms. Smith recalled a pivotal moment in her trajectory towards becoming a critical educator. In 2014, Ms. went and saw the film *Selma* (2014) with a group of people who she did not know well at the time. She identified this moment as one of the first times she sought a community for herself to engage in dialogue out-of-school in order to grow her critical sociocultural knowledge. As a result of this experience, Ms. Smith explained that her pursuit of opportunities for learning critical sociocultural knowledge became an all-encompassing endeavor for the past five years. She stated,

> I really had to—not asking people was my big thing, but finding spaces where this [sociocultural knowledge was approached in critical and humanizing methods] was already happening and just really being involved. I got involved in different ally groups for peace and justice coalition, learning from educated [in critical sociocultural knowledge] members of different groups and just hearing these conversations and starting to figure out my place in—that is my place in creating those, those things, those injustices. But then also my place in combating and disrupting them and then in my family and in my classroom. And it really surprised, oh man... But so I mean, so I think first and foremost is my evolution in thinking about this. And I had to. It wasn't something that I was able to do on my own. [Interview 2 Transcript, January 2018]

Even as Ms. Smith reflected and shared her experiences and learning from her own all-encompassing curriculum, it was evident to me that she was always in a state of crisis—of unlearning. Ms. Smith often took long pauses in her discourse. She repeated words and often cut herself off mid-sentence. Ms. Smith demonstrated a measured approach to sharing her reflections. I often felt a sort of emotional heaviness during our interactions, and I would record in my own reflections how serious Ms. Smith's disposition was during our talks. In other words, when we were in the middle of these conversations, there was no joking around.

One experience that made up Ms. Smith's out-of-school, all-encompassing curriculum was to host a monthly dinner club with 8 to 10 women, half of whom identified as women of color and half of whom identified as White. Ms. Smith had brought this group together by reaching out, and some of the participants were parents and teachers from Coyote Elementary. According to Ms. Smith, the dinner club met in order to problem-pose and problem-solve on a variety of issues related to inequity; however, I had the sense per our conversations that most of the work was grounded in issues related to the realities of racism. For Ms. Smith, the power of the dinner group was to engage in learning critical sociocultural knowledge in community through inviting multiple perspectives and problem-posing. It was also a space where the group could consider the racial concerns at Coyote Elementary, including the lack of diversity among the faculty. And, then these concerns were addressed to the administration by faculty and parents.

Being mothers

Ms. Smith and Ms. Martinez were both mothers of daughters (neither Ms. Smith nor Ms. Martinez had sons), and they both expressed how their work as critical educators was inspired and sustained by their work as mothers. Through my analysis, it became clear to me that Ms. Martinez and Ms. Smith's sense of responsibility to their daughters fueled their activism for a more just world, and at the same time, I began to learn that this was an important connection that many female scholars had inquired into in the past. There is a strong tradition of scholarship in the fields of feminism, particularly Black and Chicana feminism, dedicated to illuminating the bridge between mothering and activism (e.g., Case, 1997; Dixson & Dingus, 2008; Villenas, 2001). In the late 1990s, Case wrote about the tradition of "othermothering," in response to the mistreatment and negative judgment mothers of color often experienced in society. "Othermothering" is the act of

mothers in a community looking out for and providing protection and support to the children of other mothers (specifically in African American urban communities), thereby pushing back and standing in solidarity with one another as mothers, activists, women, and people of color. Similar to Case's (1997) study of mothering in an African American community, Villenas (2001) inquired into the racial positioning of Latina mothers in their community. She conducted an ethnographic study on Latina mothers in rural North Carolina. These new immigrant mothers were being judged by the community, specifically the White patriarchy, as problems in response to the way they were raising their children. Villenas learned how these mothers fought back against the unfair and deficit positioning of Latina mothers in their communities. She reported,

> Latina mothers, however, reversed their deficit framing and reaffirmed Latino family lives through their life histories and narratives about family education. While the racialized gendered experience of settlement and labor structured Latina mothers' "educated" identities and their childrearing and community building efforts in Hope City, Latina mothers also resituated themselves vis-à-vis Latino and white patriarchy with anything other then mindless deference to both sexism in the home and economic exploitation by white bosses. In complex and contradictory ways, the women claimed their value and their "educated" identities as mothers and educators in el hogar and in the network of family and kin. (p. 12)

Villenas (2001) concluded that their resistance and activism not only repositioned their standing, but also, more broadly, repositioned the Latino family's framing in the community of Hope City.

Ms. Smith and Ms. Martinez's viewpoints seemed to align with Case's and Villenas's findings that mothering daughters involves fighting not only against sexism, but against all forms of inequality. According to Ms. Smith and Ms. Martinez, they did not believe that their daughters' futures in this society were guaranteed to be equitable or just due to discrimination based on gender, race, and sexuality. Throughout the year, both of them expressed the importance of raising their daughters to believe in themselves and

believe in the strength of their voices. Ms. Smith and Ms. Martinez advocated for and with their daughters for their individuality, independence, and fair treatment. Being a mother was another driving force in the fight for social justice and equity for Ms. Martinez and Ms. Smith.

Ms. Martinez was a single mother, and she and her daughter, Lola, were very close. I had the pleasure of meeting and visiting with Lola a number of times during data collection, and most of the findings presented in this section are drawn from my field notes and memos of informal conversations with Ms. Martinez throughout the year. Just as Ms. Martinez herself resisted American society's dominant expectations of what it means to be a Mexican woman, she also raised Lola to resist the constraints of society's stereotypes:

> Right! We [Mexicans] don't read. We're lazy. We have a lot of babies. We are very passive, and sure there are Mexicans like that, but there's also other Mexicans that are like me, very rebellious. I grew up with heavy metal. And that's very important -within our own little groups, you know, being I'm from San Antonio, my sister and I are so different. People expect you to be all like in the same box or like you are similar. We have very different tastes. I'm there. You're going to go each person by each person with what their life is - individually, um, diversity or something. So, I'm hoping to always provide a space like that for my daughter and for my students. [Interview 2 Transcript, January 2018]

According to Ms. Martinez, Lola was an independent thinker. Lola was a vegan, a musician, a high school graduate, a traveler, a nature enthusiast, a huge fan of anime, and identified as Goth and Punk [Memos and Field Notes]. Lola often attended Baha'i services with her mother, but she did not identify as a Baha'i. At the time of the study, I would regularly ask Ms. Martinez about Lola, and she would light up and share what her daughter was working on at the time. Ms. Martinez described her relationship with her daughter as open and supportive. They were part of each other's activism and social lives, and at the same time, they both had their own passions and commitments separate from

each other. I learned from Ms. Martinez that she learned about new music and veganism from Lola; although she was herself a fan of heavy metal, Lola had ignited a love of punk music in her. Furthermore, Ms. Martinez expected the extended family to stand with and learn from Lola.

Ms. Martinez often said that Lola was a constant source of inspiration for her own activism. She worked to make the world a better place for her daughter—and Ms. Martinez told me she reminded Lola all the time that she was loved and enough. Ms. Martinez expressed her desire for Lola to one day attend college and pursue a college degree. She attributed so much of her own success and independence to education that it was natural that she would want that for Lola too. Yet, at the same time, Ms. Martinez never expressed any disappointment or regrets regarding the decisions Lola had made thus far, and she stated that Lola deserved her own journey and a mother who stood by her unconditionally. Ms. Martinez did not need or want Lola to follow in her footsteps – she wanted Lola to create her own path with her by her side. Learning how to be Lola's mother, according Ms. Martinez, informed the pedagogical decisions and classroom environment she curated for her first-grade students. She explained that all she wanted was for them [Lola and her students] "to have a passion for something" [Interview 2 Transcript, January 2018].

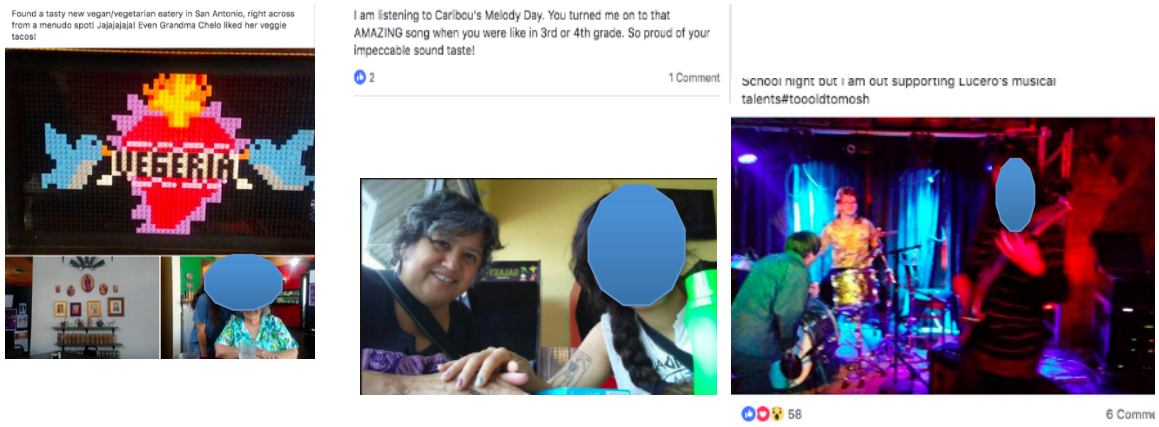


Figure 4.3. Ms. Martinez and Lola [from Facebook, 2017-2018].

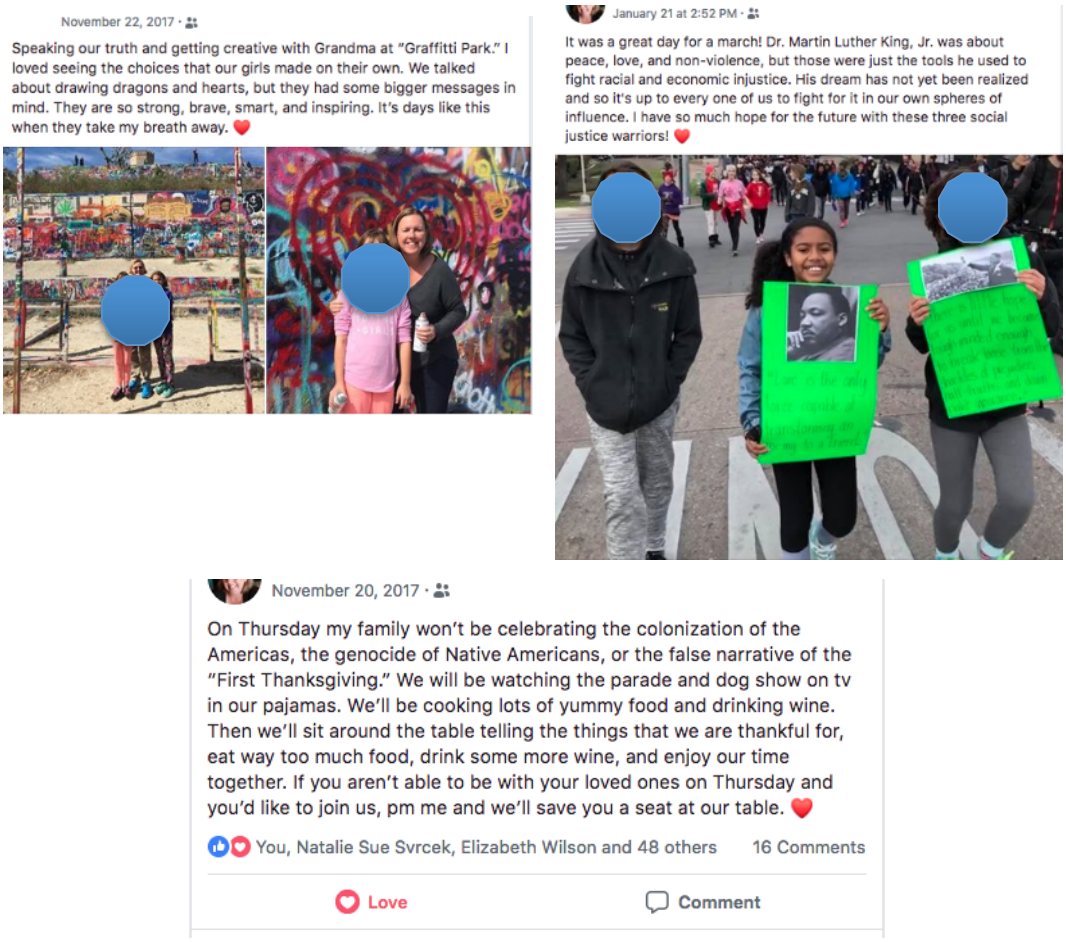
Ms. Smith was the mother of two young, upper elementary age daughters at the time of the study. As I mentioned, Ms. Smith's daughters attended Coyote Elementary, where she was a third-grade teacher. Her eldest daughter, Helen, was in fifth grade, and her younger daughter, Elizabeth, was in third grade. The two of them would often join me and Ms. Smith when we went out for breakfast or coffee, and I would see them at the end of the school day on the days when I visited Ms. Smith's classroom. It was evident from my informal conversations with them that they knew (and approved) of their mother's political and pedagogical stance at Coyote Elementary. They thought their mom was the best teacher.

Below, I share some images from Ms. Smith's social media pages on her time spent with her daughters out-of-school. In the images at the local graffiti park, Ms. Smith wrote,

> Speaking their truth and getting creative with Grandma at "Graffiti Park." I loved seeing the choices that our girls made on their own. We talked about drawing dragons and hearts, but they had some bigger messages in mind. They are so

> strong, brave, smart, and inspiring. It's days like this when they take my breath away. [Ms. Smith, Facebook post, November 2017]

Ms. Smith invited her own mother to join her with her daughters on this adventure, and just as in this post, and many others from the year that I spent with Ms. Smith, she made reference to her daughters' commitments to social justice at this young age. In this narrative of their time together at the park, Ms. Smith expressed some surprise for the "bigger messages" that her daughters spoke up about through their art. Ms. Smith, based on this post, would have understood if her elementary age daughters would have stuck to the plan to paint dragons and hearts; possibly she and society considered that a more traditional type of art for young girls. However, Ms. Smith was often delightfully surprised by the decisions her daughters made in terms of speaking up for racial, LGBTQ, and gender equity.



On Thursday my family won't be celebrating the colonization of the Americas, the genocide of the Native Americans, or the false narrative of the "First Thanksgiving." We will be watching the parade and dog show on tv in our pajamas. We'll be cooking lots of yummy food and drinking wine. Then we'll sit around the table telling the things that we are thankful for, eat way too much food, drink some more wine, and enjoy our time together. If you aren't able to be with your loved ones on Thursday and you'd like to join us, DM me and we'll save you a seat at our table. (heart emoji).

Figure 4.4. Ms. Smith and her daughters, Community Activism [from Facebook, 2017-2018]

Ms. Smith, like Ms. Martinez, was becoming in the company of her daughters. By supporting them in their unlearning, she continued her own working through of crisis (Kumashiro, 2001; 2009). I know from our conversations that Ms. Smith did explicitly teach her daughters by adding to and disrupting their partial knowledge about dominant historical narratives. Furthermore, Ms. Smith's narratives to her daughters included explicit teaching on recognizing their privilege due to their Whiteness, while at the same time addressing the inequities they may experience due to their gender and/or sexuality. For example, during our work together, Ms. Smith resisted the narrative of Thanksgiving with her students in her role of critical educator, but she also refuted the narrative of Thanksgiving in her own home with her daughters (see social media post above). She publicly posted her stance on her Facebook page by naming the atrocities that she associated this well-loved American holiday with including "colonization," "genocide," and "false narrative of the 'First Thanksgiving.'" It was evident that as the holiday was getting closer, Ms. Smith was reframing by offering additional perspectives on the "false narrative" of the American Thanksgiving story to her daughters. She also arranged with her family in advance that "Thanksgiving" in their house would work differently because they were going to acknowledge the *true* narrative of this holiday. And, finally, it was necessary for Ms. Smith to support her daughters in their friendship with each other—specifically, to support them in being "social justice warriors" together. She shared in our first interview,

> And I was like [to her daughters], "You're learning, you know, but you have to treat each other nicely and you're going to be best friends. You are sisters—best friends for life. You will always have each other and you need to remember that." But I said, "I'm so proud of you girls, you know, like you're such better girls than I was when I was a kid." [Interview 1 Transcript, October 2017]

For Ms. Smith and Ms. Martinez, being a mother, like being a teacher, was an all-encompassing identity. Ms. Smith and Ms. Martinez made decisions in both roles all the time, and they had to constantly consider what was best for their daughters and their students. As a result of my analysis of the narratives and reflections that Ms. Martinez and Ms. Smith chose to share about their daughters, I found that for them, being critical educators also meant being critical mothers. As they were working to create an all-encompassing curriculum to grow their critical sociocultural knowledge for themselves as critical educators, they simultaneously worked to do the same for their daughters.

CONCLUSION

Across this chapter, I have sought to illuminate how three critical educators sustain and grow their enactment of critical pedagogies. My first finding is that the teachers continuously pursued developing their own critical sociocultural knowledge by designing their own all-encompassing curriculum of experiences that supported them in their becoming. As they actively participated in these experiences, the teachers sought crisis and were willing to improvise. My next finding was that the teachers' all-encompassing curriculums occurred in both in- and out-of-school contexts. Ms. Barker, Ms. Martinez, and Ms. Smith were engaging in many of these experiences simultaneously, and it is likely that they were working through multiple cycles of praxis at once in order to make sense of their learning. In many ways, specifically with their work in the out-of-school contexts, the teachers were pushing through the barriers of the institutions (e.g., public school and higher education); hence, they were disrupting the dominant narratives and constructs of Whiteness upheld by the institutions by further developing their critical sociocultural knowledge in spaces that were not necessarily constrained by Whiteness.

It was likely that the teachers had been exposed to critical theory as part of their teacher education programs, professional development experiences, and personal inquiry. However, as I have stated throughout, I never sat with the teachers to teach critical theory (broadly or specifically); therefore, I was taken by surprise when I analyzed the data across multiple sources and across teachers and learned how much these three teachers inherently understood and lived their lives as critical educators across in- and out-of-school contexts. In addition to creating opportunities to grow their critical sociocultural knowledge, Ms. Barker, Ms. Smith, and Ms. Martinez also recognized that opportunities to learn critical sociocultural knowledge were already happening all the time around them.

All three teachers recognized their work as political. At the time of the study, Ms. Barker's work as a critical educator remained more closely tied to the in-school context than that of Ms. Martinez and Ms. Smith. Ms. Smith and Ms. Martinez had extended their activism well beyond the borders of the institution. I was left wondering about the implications and impact of doing political work such spaces as public school that are deemed neutral, versus doing political work in named political spaces. What is the impact of these different settings on teachers' enactment of critical pedagogies? Ms. Smith, Ms. Barker, and Ms. Martinez had all continued their learning of critical sociocultural knowledge in varying degrees in overtly political spaces, and as a result, they had experienced being political in political contexts (e.g., rallies and social media). In Chapter Five, I will continue to explore the extent to which these teachers' engagement in critical activism out-of-school correspond to the extent in which they disrupted the status quo in-school through their facilitation of whole group discussion drawing on multicultural children's literature.

Chapter 5: Reimagining the Possibilities of Interactive Read Aloud

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed how teachers who self-identify as critical educators sustain and grow their enactment of critical pedagogies. My analysis revealed that these three teachers, Ms. Barker, Ms. Martinez, and Ms. Smith, designed a rigorous all-encompassing (Brown, 2013) curriculum for themselves in both in- and out-of-school contexts in order to further their own critical sociocultural knowledge. In this chapter and the next chapter, I discuss how these teachers enacted critical pedagogies in their classrooms. Across these two chapters, I present findings in response to the following two research questions: 1. *During whole-group discussions of multicultural children's literature, how do teachers address critical sociocultural knowledge and issues of inequity?* and 2. *How do critical educators navigate the critical encounters that arise when they discuss multicultural children's literature?* In this chapter, I focus on how the three teacher participants enacted critical pedagogies through structures, resources, and instruction across time. In the following chapter, Chapter Six, I will focus on the structure and nature of literature discussions.

In my second research question, I use the term "critical encounters" as defined by DeNicolo and Franquiz (2006): a critical encounter occurs "when a word, concept, or event in a story surprises, shocks, or frightens the reader or readers to such a degree that they seek to inquire further about vocabulary or events selected by the author" (p. 157). I consider a critical encounter an example of *crisis* (Kumashiro, 2001; 2009). Moments of critical encounter, or crisis, involve a transaction (Lewis, 2001; Rosenblatt, 1982) between reader(s) and text that causes discomfort and generates a need to know more about why, what, or how something is happening in the text. DeNicolo and Franquiz (2006) conclude that critical encounters can lead to transformative experiences for the

student. I argue that the "critical encounter" can be transformative because it challenges students to stop, inquire, and work through moments of difficulty (Kumashiro, 2001; 2009), which is what Kumashiro finds most important about crisis. This process of inquiry can lead students to disrupt and reframe their sociocultural knowledge towards, we hope, humanizing and critical perspectives.

Based on my analysis of multiple data sources, including audio and video recordings, transcriptions, and classroom artifacts (e.g., students' reader responses, photos of language charts, memos, and field notes), I found that teachers addressed critical sociocultural knowledge and navigated critical encounters with their students by *reimagining the possibilities of interactive read aloud in the elementary classroom*. I argue here that the teachers intended to normalize the experience of talking about social inequities and thereby cultivate their students' critical sociocultural knowledge. For example, Ms. Smith shared,

> So, what I am going to talk about is a year of normalizing differences within my classroom. What I really hope to do is to create conversations too, to make it okay for us to disagree, for us to call each other out, for us to notice when things are not right in our own lives, for me to receive push back from students when I'm doing those things. And really to disrupt these reproductive practices that are harming our students. A big part of that is recognizing the part that that power plays within. [Interview 4 Transcript, June 2018]

Ms. Smith named the need to pay attention to the "part that power plays" with students; this explicit and sustained focus on power was apparent in all three teachers' work, which centered on critical sociocultural knowledge (Brown, 2013). Ms. Smith's words here also suggest that she expects and hopes to generate "critical encounters" for her students through conversations as they "disagree" and "call each other out." In this chapter and the following one, I will provide many examples of how these teachers introduced students to the practice of talking with each other about sociocultural topics by calling attention to

macro- and micro-level power structures (Erickson, 2004). In doing so, the teachers helped their students adopt a critical and humanizing approach in order to disrupt oppression and learn to see, hear, and feel the possibilities of transformative (Banks, 1993; 1994; 2014; Freire, 1970/2000) social justice through their own voices. Under the broad category of *reimagining the possibilities of interactive read aloud*, I describe two approaches that these three teachers used to foreground critical perspectives with their students within the interactive read aloud event: 1) by implementing daily routines and 2) by designing their curricula and selecting resources.

REIMAGINING THE POSSIBILITIES OF INTERACTIVE READ ALOUD

Ms. Smith, Ms. Barker, and Ms. Martinez identified their literacy structure and instruction as workshop. Reading aloud and facilitating a literature discussion with the whole group is a core practice of workshop. In read aloud, the teacher does the hard work of decoding the text, and students can focus on comprehending the text being read to them through listening and talking about the text with their teacher and peers. Accordingly, practitioners often focus their instruction on comprehension strategies during read aloud (Miller, 2002/2012). Unlike Miller and other practitioners who organize read aloud units by comprehension strategies, Ms. Barker, Ms. Smith, and Ms. Martinez organized their units to focus on social justice issues. In this sense, I argue, they reimagined the possibilities of the interactive read aloud event. These three teachers conducted their read aloud using structures similar to those recommended by Miller and others (e.g., Routman, 1991; Taberski, 2010); however, their read alouds differed from these existing models in that their explicit objective was not to teach comprehension. Instead, they opened with statements like, "Gandhi was peaceful. He changed things by being peaceful. We can change the world and be peaceful. Yes, kind of like *Pete the Cat*

[one of the students' favorite books]. It is all good!" [Martinez, Read Aloud Transcript, August 30, 2017]. In this opening, Ms. Martinez established the purpose of the read aloud with the students: they would learn about a person who made change at a global level through peace, and they would think about how they, too, can make changes in this world. Ms. Barker and Ms. Smith planned and delivered their read alouds with the same focus on social justice Ms. Martinez exemplifies here. For all three teachers, the purpose of the interactive read aloud was to expand students' existing sociocultural knowledge in critical and humanizing directions.

Although these three teachers' focus was on expanding critical sociocultural knowledge, they provided daily comprehension instruction. By guiding students through such complex topics and conversations, the teachers continuously supported students' comprehension development in meaningful ways. For example, a shared theme across all three classrooms was empathy, and all three teachers frequently used a comprehension exercise of asking the students to imagine what it would feel like to experience the circumstances in the text. As Ms. Barker reflected on her approach to whole group discussion, she explained,

> I think it just helps me be more aware of like which pieces of the book I need to continue to pull out and talk about and to check in and see where they [students] are in their mindset. And so, you know, if something else comes up in the book where you know, the character is faced with that problem and we can put ourselves in their situation and think, "OK, how would we act in this situation?" Just kind of making sure that I bring it up at the right places to just kind of see how the kids are doing with it and if they've changed what they're thinking. [Interview 1 Transcript, September 2017]

Ms. Barker guided the students to imagine what it would be like to stand in the shoes of the other "by letting characters serve as the guide" (Roser, Martinez, Fuhrken, & McDonnold, 2007, p. 552). Through this process, Ms. Barker aimed to "change" their

thinking, and she was acutely aware of her responsibility to "check in" and guide students towards transformation throughout their critical conversations about multicultural children's literature. Comprehension instruction worked in parallel ways in Ms. Smith's and Ms. Martinez's classes. In the following sections, I discuss two key ways the teachers made use of the interactive read aloud as a space for critical pedagogies: 1) by implementing daily routines and 2) by designing their curricula and selecting resources.

Teachers' Daily Routines

As workshop teachers, these three teachers valued the read aloud as an essential component of their daily literacy instruction. They each invested between 20 minutes and an hour for this event every day. In addition, they would often make a clear announcement when read aloud was over and it was time to transition into the next structure of the day. Thus, interactive read aloud became a predictable routine for the students, and within a few weeks of the start of the school year, they came to expect that the daily read aloud and discussion would center on sociocultural topics.

The predictability of this event is not an unusual feature for workshop teachers; as described above, practitioners (e.g., Miller, 2002/2012) place the interactive read aloud event at the center of reading workshop. However, Ms. Martinez, Ms. Barker, and Ms. Smith reimagined the typical routine of read aloud by engaging students in critical conversations on sociocultural topics during the formal block of time allotted for literacy instruction, rather than giving in to their school's and district's expectations by only teaching state standards in preparation for district and state assessments. These three teachers did not read multicultural literature or address sociocultural topics on a merely occasional basis. Instead, they made a sustained commitment to this routine of teaching critical sociocultural knowledge (Brown, 2013) in read alouds throughout the school year.

Research regarding inservice teachers' enactment of critical pedagogies often concludes that inservice teachers find it challenging to meet the demands of the mandated curriculum and still find time to teach for social justice (e.g, Alford & Jetnikoff, 2016). These teachers reimagined the daily routine of read alouds in order to rise to this challenge. As critical educators, Ms. Barker, Ms. Smith, and Ms. Martinez used daily read alouds for the primary purpose of teaching critical sociocultural knowledge, but they also continuously embedded the objectives of the mandated state curriculum, *The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills*, within their frameworks of critical pedagogies. Furthermore, the teachers embraced the dynamic nature of critical pedagogies (Freire, 1970/2000; Giroux, 2012), as well as the dynamic nature of workshop structure (Bomer & Bomer, 2001). Therefore, the interactive read aloud was dynamic and took diverse forms, as I illustrate below. Although all three teachers developed daily routines of read aloud instruction, these routines varied within each classroom. Interactive read alouds included a variety of activities including small group collaborations and independent reading responses, as I will explain further in Chapter Six.

Because the teachers maintained a consistent commitment to this routine, the students came to understand their role and responsibility within this event early on. They knew from the start that they had a responsibility to take their thinking as participants very seriously, and they had to be prepared to share their thinking with their peers and teacher during these events. During the first week of school, Ms. Smith established the structure of interactive read aloud with her students. The students understood: 1) read aloud would occur every day; 2) they would each talk to a peer about the book during each read aloud; and 3) they would talk to each other each day before, during, and after the read aloud. Ms. Martinez and Ms. Barker made these same three principles clear to their students.

My second research question asked how teachers navigated critical encounters. The daily routine of the event provided a sense of safety or support to the teachers and the students as they navigated critical encounters. By developing a year-long curriculum dedicated to social justice perspectives and implementing this curriculum through daily routines, the teachers ensured that students could always count on having time to work through such questions as why? Or how? This consistent routine meant that students knew that they would meet again the next day to critically discuss the sociocultural topics at hand. Some students occasionally expressed feeling burned out by these conversations. For example, Gavin in Ms. Barker's class said, "Oh no! More history!" during the spring discussion of *Amelia's Road* (1993) [February 2018]. In contrast, other students took advantage of the routine to ask repeated questions over days and even weeks; for example, in Ms. Smith's class, Elliot asked "Why is there racism?" after each read aloud event during the *Civil Rights* unit [Video-recordings and Transcripts, February and March, 2018].

The routine provided a sense of stability that helped teachers navigate critical encounters. The teachers and the students learned together through this routine that there would always be another day to talk more and continue working through the critical encounters, or crises, that they were experiencing. According to Kumashiro (2009), it is the process of working through crisis that enables transformation. In these three classrooms, daily routines ensured that students and teachers always had the time and space to do so. Thus, I argue, the teachers' decisions to designate daily time and space each day for their students to work through their critical encounters (DeNicolo & Franquiz, 2006) is a key way in which they reimagined the possibilities of interactive read aloud. In the next section, I present the curriculum and resources that these teachers used to implement their transformation approach (Banks, 1993; 1994; 2014) to reading workshop.

Curriculum Design and Resources

This section presents the ways teachers developed curricula and selected resources in order to reimagine the possibilities of interactive read aloud as a structure for critical education. These practices included naming an overarching classroom theme, designing yearlong units, communicating their work to the families and school community with transparency, and incorporating social action initiatives. After describing these general practices of curriculum design, I will present additional findings in two subsections: 1) selecting multicultural children's literature, and 2) drawing on the tools and language of geography.

Across these three classrooms, the teachers each planned a yearlong literacy curriculum that intertwined and centered on expanding students' critical sociocultural knowledge, as well as simultaneously teaching comprehension strategies. Ms. Smith's comment on teaching in public school illustrates this focus:

> Nothing we do in our classroom is neutral. And so when we choose not to have these conversations [on sociocultural topics], we're still teaching a lesson. We're still sending a message. And so it is critically important that we are being really intentional about what we are doing, and how we're doing it, and our behaviors of how we're doing it as well. [Ms. Smith, Interview 4, May 2018]

Ms. Smith recognized, as Brown (2013) has theorized, that sociocultural knowledge is all-encompassing in the context of school. Therefore, Ms. Smith asserted that avoiding sociocultural topics would not be an effective way to help students develop a critical perspective. This statement aligns with Kumashiro's (2001) claim about exclusion:

> By learning about only certain groups and perspectives in society, students are not learning about alternative perspectives and the contributions, experiences, and identities of Others, and by not learning such knowledge, students are not troubling the (mis)knowledge they already have. Silence and exclusion are significant parts of the "hidden curriculum." (p. 5)

In other words, a "hidden curriculum" of existing sociocultural knowledge is playing out in school all the time. According to Brown (2013), that sociocultural knowledge positions the Other (Kumashiro, 2001) as trouble, troubled, or troubling. As critical educators, Ms. Barker, Ms. Smith, and Ms. Martinez were determined not only to acknowledge the presence of sociocultural knowledge—specifically, public schools' covert commitment to perpetuating the dominant narrative of the Other as deficit (Kumashiro, 2001; 2009)—but, also, to help students develop *critical* sociocultural knowledge by calling attention to the inherent inequities within this dominant narrative.

Each teacher built their curriculum for this purpose by first naming a broad theme for their classroom, then introducing their students to this theme in the first few days of school. Ms. Smith's theme was *We are global citizens*; Ms. Martinez's was *Being a peace maker and change maker*; and Ms. Barker's was *Each kindness*. In addition, each teacher planned units of study that tied in with these broad themes. Table 5.1 presents each teacher's units of study across the academic year. Each unit was designed to inform the next one; for example, Ms. Barker's unit on Signs and Symbols provided background knowledge for her unit on the Holocaust and Lowry's (1989) *Number the Stars*.

Table 5.1 Teacher -Developed Units of Study for Reading Workshop

	Units of Study in Ms. Smith's Classroom – 3rd grade	Units of Study in Ms. Barker's Classroom – 4th grade	Units of Study in Ms. Martinez's Classroom – 1st grade
August	Same and Different		August: Peace as Change
September	Overview of Types of Discrimination	Unit: Multiple Intelligences (text set of picture books) Empathy and Kindness (*Wonder* by RJ Palacio)	September: Good Citizen
October	Story of Columbus (dominant and counter-narrative) Global Goals (United Nations Project)	Empathy and Kindness (*Wonder* by RJ Palacio)	October: Community
November	Immigration	*Ghost* by Jason Reynolds	November: Immigration and Border Crossing
December	Homelessness, Poverty, and Hunger Inquiry		January: Kindness I was unable to continue to observe in Ms. Martinez's classroom due to the demands of her schedule.
January	Underground Railroad	Unit: Civil Rights	
February	Segregation; Civil Rights (Yesterday and Today)	Unit: Signs and Symbols (Topics addressed: Japanese Internment, Migrant Farm Work, Holocaust, Loss of Mother, Global Poverty, Environmental Well-Being) (Pairing of fiction and nonfiction multimodal texts)	
March	March: Civil Rights (Yesterday and Today)	Signs and Symbols (continued)	
April	April: Women's Rights	Holocaust (*Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry)	
May	May: What is Normal?		

As the unit titles indicate, the teachers focused on concepts (e.g., discrimination, kindness, community), on historic and current events (e.g., Civil Rights), and on social action (e.g., Global Goals). Often, in elementary classrooms, the teaching of social justice perspectives leans heavily on historical events – on the past (e.g., Botelho, Young, & Nappi, 2014; Kohl, 1994); however, Ms. Barker, Ms. Smith, and Ms. Martinez's units were designed to move between the past and the present for all three types of units (concepts, events, and social action). This connection between past and present is another

way they reimagined the possibilities of interactive read aloud. For example, it is a common practice for elementary teachers to teach about the Civil Rights movement during Black History Month in February. These units are often added on and taught in the context of social studies instruction, and they often perpetuate what some scholars have called a "single story" of the Civil Rights Movement (e.g., Busey & Walker, 2017; Tschida et al., 2014). In this story, the Civil Rights leaders who are most often discussed include Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Ms. Rosa Parks, and Ms. Ruby Bridges. The "single story" approach typically implies that there was a period of time where African Americans suffered due to unequal treatment in the South, but then there was a Civil Rights Movement. As a result of Martin's marching, Rosa's refusing to give up her seat, and Ruby's bravery in going to a White school, the Civil Rights movement resolved the unequal treatments for African Americans; now, we are a fair and just society that does not suffer from racism or any -ism (Busey & Walker, 2017). In other words, critical educators can fall short in their social justice teaching by framing narratives of oppression and inequity as if they begin and end in the past, rather than emphasizing how inequity persists in the present (e.g., Carlson, 2003; Kohl, 1994).

The three critical educators in this project refuted this approach to critical practice, and they embraced the need for change in today's society. Accordingly, they designed units that emphasized how what happened in the past can help us understand what is happening in our world now. For example, Ms. Smith and Ms. Barker designed their *Civil Rights* units to start before Black History Month and extend beyond into the month of March. This served as further evidence of their pursuit of a transformation approach (Banks, 1993; 1994) as critical educators. Ms. Smith and Ms. Barker celebrated Black History during Black History Month; however, they did not allow their unit of study on the importance of civil rights for African Americans and other marginalized

groups in America and the world to be restricted to one month of the year. I argue that in many ways, that the struggle for civil rights and anti-oppression was the three teachers' yearlong focus.

In Ms. Smith's classroom, the units of study dedicated to Black lives extended from January through March. As Ms. Smith read aloud multicultural children's literature about historical events in African American history, sharing more than just the stories of Martin, Rosa, and Ruby, she also explicitly discussed current events about police brutality and the Black Lives Matter movement. For example, at the end of February, Ms. Smith read aloud *Sit-In: How Four Friends Stood Up by Sitting Down* (Pinkney & Pinkney, 2010). Throughout the read aloud, the students were asking many questions, as well as openly voicing their disappointment in America [Field Notes and Video-Recordings]. It is important to remember that the students and Ms. Smith had immersed themselves in books, talk, and inquiry on the Civil Rights Movement for nearly eight weeks at this point, and the students on this day kept asking, "Why did America allow segregation?" or "Why was there segregation?" In response, Ms. Smith often repeated that one purpose of reading and learning history was to make sense of "discrimination" today. She said, "That is why it is important for us to learn about history. These things did not just happen in the past. Sometimes they are even happening right now, and we need to watch out for it" [Ms. Smith, Transcript of Read Aloud, February 28, 2018]. As I reported earlier, Ms. Smith from the first weeks of school had positioned herself and her students as "upstanders, not bystanders," and by explaining why learning history was relevant to the present, Ms. Smith reminded the students that they had the insight to notice inequity and the power to make change today.

At the close of this unit, which lasted approximately ten weeks, Ms. Smith and the students celebrated their learning by presenting their own formal inquiry projects on

African American leaders (yesterday and today) at an event attended by their parents. At this event, Ms. Smith opened the presentation by asserting the need to study history in order to make sense of discrimination in our current political context. She deliberately wore a Black Lives Matter t-shirt to this event as another way to make sure that parents, students, and administrators understood that this was a celebration of students' learning of African American Civil Rights—yesterday and today. By wearing this shirt, Ms. Smith also made visible her belief that when Black Lives Matter in America, then all lives will matter. The image below shows Ms. Smith's Facebook post on the day of this celebration with students and families.

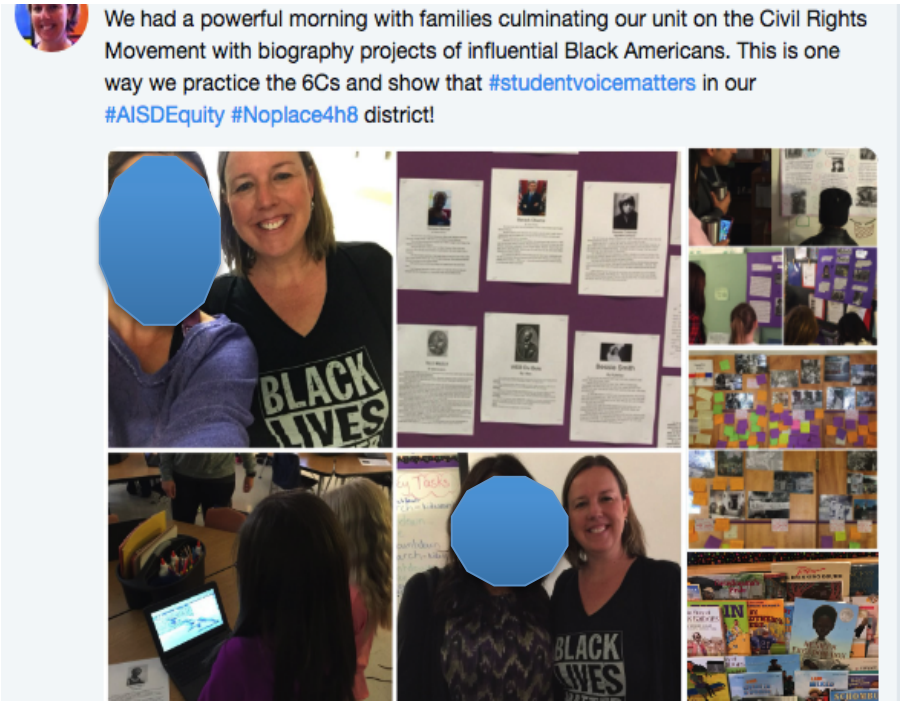


Figure 5.1. Ms. Smith in Black Lives Matter T-shirt, Facebook, March 2018.

In Ms. Barker's classroom, the unit on *Civil Rights of African Americans* opened the unit of Civil Rights for other Americans, specifically immigrants from all over the

world, during her *Signs and Symbols* unit. Ms. Barker explained her rationale for this organization of topics during our third interview:

> I think like, so the kids did have some background knowledge about segregation and a little bit about World War II and things like that. And I think that they knew those things were going on like, "Oh, that's something that happened in the past when we read *Amelia's Road* and *The Running Shoes*." Those were issues that are happening in our world. Like right now. And these kids, because of where they're being brought up, they, I mean, except for a couple of them, they really truly don't understand like how privileged they are, you know? And so I think talking about *The Running Shoes* (2008) and *Amelia's Road* (1993), I think a lot of them realize like, "Oh my gosh, I am really lucky to have what I have." And you know, I think about Student V; he's from Vietnam. I mean where he lived in Vietnam was like dirt roads, you know, little like village. And, I want this to be a space where he can tell his story. [Ms. Barker, Interview 3 Transcript, May 2018]

Here, Ms. Barker explains why she felt the need to bridge the past to the present within her units. She acknowledged that her students, due to their race and socioeconomic status, were likely not aware of the challenges that many people in the world face (e.g., Dyches, 2018; Thein, Beach, & Parks, 2007). She also recognized they had some knowledge of historical events that were oppressive (Kumashiro, 2001), but that they needed to be made aware of how injustices from the past were not over. Furthermore, since some of her own students had immigrated to the United States, Ms. Barker felt some urgency about creating a classroom where the students would approach each other and their stories with kindness and empathy.

The classrooms' themes and the units of instruction served as the primary frameworks for the teachers' and students' work in reading workshop, and the interactive read aloud was at the center of all of the instruction each day, as well as broadly for each unit. This event served to initiate, sustain, and conclude learning within and across the units in each classroom. Therefore, by the end of the year, across these three classrooms, the units together formed a multi-layered narrative composed of the books read aloud, the

stories that teachers and students shared in response to those books, their corresponding discussions on critical sociocultural issues, and the inquiries they conducted together in order to learn more (e.g., Adichie, 2009; Tschida et al., 2014). At the heart of these composite narratives across time was the interactive read aloud event.

As part of developing a curriculum that consistently aimed to develop students' critical sociocultural knowledge and address issues of inequity, the teachers each decided to be transparent about their work with their school community and their students' families. Among many educators who teach for social justice, there is a common notion that it is pragmatic to teach "your way" behind closed doors, but appear to follow the rules in public—a practice some call "strategic compliance" (Atkinson, 2012). Teachers often take this stance in response to the "deadening pedagogies" (Giroux, 2012, n.p.) promoted by federal, state, and district policies, which prioritize preparing students for success on standardized assessments. Teachers in some ways retreat to this closed-door policy as a form of survival (Giroux, 2012). In contrast to this common approach, the three teachers in my study were open with parents and administrators about the type of work they valued, as well as the reasons for this work. For example, in a letter home to parents during the Discrimination Unit (September 2017), Ms. Smith wrote,

> We [the class] talked about how we will reference these feelings throughout the year as we learn about <u>different types of discrimination</u>, think about history and current events through multiple perspectives, learn about other cultures, hear about how children all over the world are making a difference in their communities, and find ways to make change in our own communities.

Ms. Smith explained to me after school on this day [Field Notes, September 2017] that she felt confident that the parents would receive this letter favorably. She referenced her tenure and status at the school. Ms. Smith had taught many of her current students' older siblings, and as a result, she had forged strong bonds with the families. Also, Ms. Smith

explained to me that she believed her racial identity as a White woman gave her leverage to implement such a unit (discrimination), as well as her vision for a yearlong curriculum focused on discrimination at an elementary school that served majority White, middle class families. In other words, Ms. Smith wondered out loud to me whether a person of color could teach this vision or teach these units with as much support as she received from her families; she suggested that her racial identity fostered trust with her students' families, and she tried to use that to her advantage in her work as a critical educator (Freire 1970/2000).

All three teachers informed the parents of their vision for social justice teaching at multiple events at the start of the year (e.g., Back to School Night and Parent Teacher Conferences) by displaying their themes, books, language charts, classroom artifacts, etc. This enabled parents to get a clear picture of the work that was happening and would continue to happen in the classroom. For example, the following images from Ms. Martinez's room illustrate artifacts that she used to advocate for global perspectives, peace education, and Latinx culture.

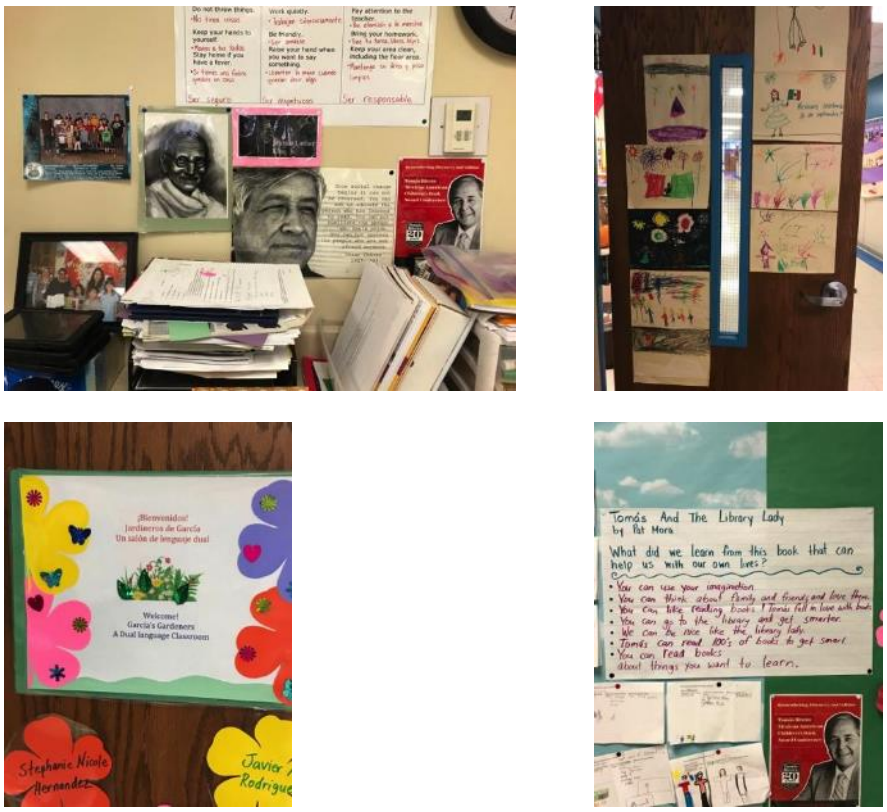


Figure 5.2. Ms. Martinez's classroom: Display of global cultures and perspectives.

These were visible for every parent and administrator to see as they entered Ms. Martinez's classroom. Ms. Barker, Ms. Smith, and Ms. Martinez also displayed their students' work on social justice, including writing and art, all around the school. I argue that this was a form of social action for the teachers and students within the context of school. Through these displays, the students' transformations towards criticality were visible to the entire school community. Throughout the year, as far as I understood, these teachers were allowed to post these displays in shared areas of the school, not just in their own classrooms, and the students would often express pride to their teacher and each other in response to seeing their work on display [Field Notes].

In addition, Ms. Martinez and Ms. Smith organized their students' participation in events that had impact beyond the walls of the schools. For example, Ms. Smith dedicated multiple lessons to learning about *The Global Goals* project, an initiative set by the United Nations General Assembly in October 2017. The project is described below:

> The 17 Goals: In 2015, world leaders agreed to 17 goals for a better world by 2030. These goals have the power to end poverty, fight inequality and stop climate change. Guided by the goals, it is now up to all of us, governments, businesses, civil society and the general public to work together to build a better future for everyone. (Global Goals, n.d.)

During this unit, Ms. Smith and her students watched several videos from the *World's Largest Lesson* series (http://worldslargestlesson.globalgoals.org/). Ms. Smith paired these videos with the text *If the World Were a Village: A Book about the World's People* (2011) as the daily interactive read aloud. In response to the videos and the call to action, the students completed surveys in the classroom and around the school and reported their findings back to *The Global Goals* project website. On October 20, Ms. Smith and the students focused on the topic of gender equality, and they had just watched a brief video on the topic narrated by the actress Emma Watson. Ms. Smith, then, invited the students to get involved and take action in eradicating this inequity between men and women. She said,

> We are going to be thinking about leaders in our community, our community in CITY - our community in our country, and we are going to be thinking about who those important leaders are. Who those leaders are, especially when we are thinking about gender equality. It gives us an idea of what is important. So, if we are really believing in gender equality, and we are working for gender equality, and we have gender equality, would we have mostly men, mostly women, or about the same of each?
>
> Here is my question: *If we have gender equality in our communities, would our leaders be mostly men, mostly women, or equal amount of both?* What do you think? You can say it out loud. Probably an equal amount of both. Our leaders would be male and female - and about the same amount of both. So, we are going

> to do a survey, and this is what Emma Watson is talking about. This is our survey - we are decision makers in our local community. [Ms. Smith talks the kids through the survey.] Be really careful when you do this because your data is going to be entered into The Global Goals database, and they are going to add it to the other data that has already been compiled from places all over our planet. We will get to look at those on Monday. [Transcript of Read Aloud, October 2017]

This is an image of one student's survey responses:

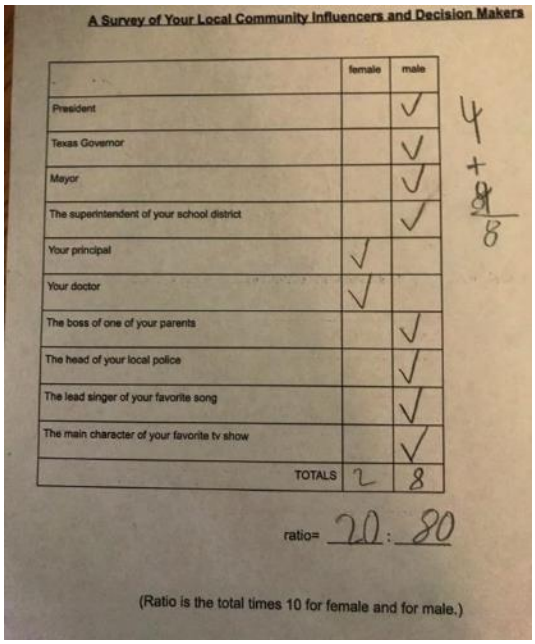


Figure 5.3. Sample of student's completed survey for Global Goals Project.

Ms. Smith incorporated the Global Goals project into her reading workshop time, and through this project, her students participated in activism together with people from "all over the planet."

This unit served as a springboard for three major inquiry projects that Ms. Smith's students worked on later in the year, all with strong social action components. In the first unit, Ms. Smith supported the students' critical sociocultural knowledge development by focusing on *Hunger, Homelessness, and Poverty*. She and the students inquired into these areas of concern in both local (their city) and global contexts. The second inquiry unit

was built into the 10-week-long unit on civil rights, and in the third inquiry project, the students chose their own community concern or global goal to learn about, then presented their learning to the school community and their families.

In the remainder of this chapter and in Chapter Six, I present examples of the books and the multiple approaches to talk that drove the teachers' enactment of critical pedagogies in the elementary classroom. The following section focuses on one of the teachers' primary tools to address critical sociocultural knowledge and issues of inequity: multicultural children's literature.

Multicultural children's literature. The teachers read multicultural children's literature to their students on an almost daily basis. This literature served as a tool and a shared experience for all participants, as well as a springboard for each day's discussion. Again, I assert that these three teachers were reimagining the possibilities for the use of multicultural children's literature. Unlike many reading workshop practitioners, these three teachers were not selecting literature strictly for the purpose of teaching comprehension strategies. Their most important criteria were that the books addressed sociocultural topics with care and quality. With quality literature, the teachers were confident that meaningful comprehension would be constantly developed in each student. In this section, in addition to reporting the findings that highlight the teachers' use of multicultural children's literature as a primary resource for a transformation approach (Banks, 1993; 1994) to literacy instruction, I also report on the tensions that the teachers' had to navigate at times in response to their students' resistance to the narratives presented in the texts (e.g., Gavin's response to Reynold's *Ghost* (2016)).

Each teacher had her own process for selecting these texts. For instance, as reported in Chapter Four, Ms. Barker worked with colleagues during the summer months, and together they would read many new titles of diverse literature, award-winning books,

and other books that had been recommended to her throughout the year from a variety of resources (e.g., book blogs, professional development programs). She also told me that she often added a few new titles, but she also had found certain titles (e.g., *Bridge to Terabithia* [Paterson, 1977]) over the years that she loved so much that it was hard for her to replace them [Interview 1, September 2017]. Ms. Martinez turned to the award-winners too, but her focus was heavily on the awards for Latinx children's literature, specifically the Pura Belpré (American Library Association) and the Tomás Rivera (Texas State University) book awards [Interview 1, September 2017], due to her own heritage as Chicana and her dual language classroom context. She also made sure to review books that had won the Coretta Scott King Award, for books written and illustrated by African American authors, and the Jane Addams Book Award, for books that promote peace and social equality. Ms. Martinez described her text selection to me:

> When I talk to the kids I never really have a term. It's just like, "Here's a beautiful book." Some books will make you cry. They're so beautiful. And then if there's someone like Yuyi Morales [Latina, Mexican, author and illustrator], who is famous for illustrations, she might not be a writer, but her art is so... It captures the beauty and aesthetic. Like last year I did a whole unit on Yuyi Morales and her use of colors, how they [colors] respond to the emotions and just the concept of beauty—beauty in books. [Interview One Transcript, September 2017]

Ms. Martinez explained that she did not refer to the books as multicultural or diverse. Rather, as an artist herself, she promoted the beauty of the books that she read aloud in terms of the story, the art, and the message. She wanted her students to interact with the literature aesthetically, as well as politically (Lowenstein, 2009; Rosenblatt, 1982). Furthermore, as the titles of the books she selected to read aloud during my time in the classroom indicate, Ms. Martinez hoped that the students would get to know the stories of important people of color from around the world. Ms. Martinez's process for reviewing

and selecting literature aligned closely with her identity as a woman of color, a lover of the arts, and a critical educator.

Ms. Smith and Ms. Barker developed text sets for each unit, and these sets were often composed of picture books written by authors of color, which was one way for the teachers to bring multiple perspectives into the classroom. "A text set is a collection of related texts organized around a topic or line of inquiry… it includes resources from different genres, media, and levels of reading difficulty" (http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson_images/lesson305/creating.pdf). In contrast to the other teachers, Ms. Martinez did not often read aloud multiple titles within a week. Instead, she would read a single book over the span of a week, so that her text set was made up of the books she read across the year. Ms. Martinez thought it was important for her first-grade students to really learn to appreciate the beauty of literature, and she decided to read a single book in parts over days for that reason.

In the table below, I present the titles of the read alouds that I observed in Ms. Smith's classroom. For all of the units, there were additional titles that made up the text sets. This table provides the names of the unit, the titles, the author, the illustrator, the year of publication, the genre, and the form.

Table 5.2 Ms. Smith's Read Alouds, Text Sets for Units

	Units of Study, Ms. Smith's Classroom, 3rd grade	Text Sets/Observed Read Alouds	Genre and Form
August	Same and Different	● *We Are All Wonders* by R.J Palacio, 2017 ● *The Color of Us* by Karen Katz, 1999 ● *The Best Part of Me* by Wendy Ewald, 2002	Realistic Fiction Picture Books Photography
September	Overview of Types of Discrimination	● *Sneetches Movie*, Dr. Seuss, YouTube, original 1953 ● *She Persisted* by Chelsea Clinton illustrated by Alexandra Boiger, 2017 ● *My Friend has Down Syndrome* by Amanda Doering Tourville, illustrated by Kristin Sorra, 2008 ● *Hidden: A Child's Story of the Holocaust* by Loic Dauvillier and Greg Salsedo, illustrated by Marc Lizano, 2014 ● *Baseball Saved Us*, by Ken Mochizuki and Ill. by Dom Lee	Realistic Fiction Picture Books Biography Picture Book Historical Fiction Graphic Novel Movie
October	Story of Columbus (dominant and counter-narrative)	● *A Picture Book of Christopher Columbus* by David Adler, 1991 ● *Encounter* by Jane Yolen and illustrated by David Shannon (watched read aloud on YouTube), 1996	Biography Picture Book Historical Fiction Picture Book
	Global Goals (United Nations Project)	● *If the World Were a Village: A Book about the World's People* by David J. Smith, illustrated by Shelagh Armstrong, 2011 ● Global Goal videos: World's Largest Lessons, 2015	Nonfiction Picture Book Media from nonprofit: https://www.globalgoals.org/

Table 5.2 Ms. Smith's Read Alouds, Text Sets for Units (continued)

November	Immigration	● *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan, 2007 ● *The Lotus Seed* by Sherry Garland, illustrated by Tatsuro Kiuchi, 1997 ● *Two White Rabbits* by Jairo Buitrago and Rafael Yockteng, (translated by Elisa Amado), 2015	Wordless Picture Book Realistic Fiction Picture Books
December	Homelessness, Poverty, and Hunger Inquiry	● *The Lady in the Box* by Ann McGovern, illustrated by Marni Backer, 1997 ● Video: Humans of New York ● *Fly Away Home* by Eve Bunting, illustrated by Ronald Himler, 1993	Realistic Fiction Picture Books Social Media Video: Humans of New York
January	Underground Railroad	● *Heart and Soul: The Story of America and African Americans* by Kadir Nelson, 2013 ● *Henry's Freedom Box* by Ellen Levine, illustrated by Kadir Nelson, 2007 ● *Follow the Drinking Gourd* by Jeanette Winter, 1992 ● *Love* by Matt de la Peña, illustrated by Loren Long, 2018	Biography Picture Books Realistic Fiction Picture Books
February	Segregation Civil Rights (Yesterday and Today)	● *Dear Mr. Rosenwald* by Carole Boston Weatherford, illustrated by Gregory Christie, 2017 ● *Grandmama's Pride* by Becky Birtha, illustrated by Colin Bootman, 2016 ● *Rosa* by Nikki Giovanni, illustrated by Bryan Collier, 2007 ● *If A Bus Could Talk: The Story of Rosa Parks* by Faith Ringgold, 2003	Biography Picture Books Realistic Fiction Picture Books

Table 5.2 Ms. Smith's Read Alouds, Text Sets for Units (continued)

March	March: Civil Rights (Yesterday and Today)	● *Boycott Blues: How Rosa Parks Inspired a Nation* by Andrea Davis Pinkney, illustrated by Brian Pinkney, 2008 ● Little Rock Nine Video - Time Magazine ● *The Little Rock Nine and The Fight for Equal Education* by Gary Jeffrey and Nana Li, 2012 ● *Sit-in: How Four Friend Stood Up by Sitting Down*, by Andrea Davis Pinkney, illustrated by Brian Pinkney, 2010 ● *Freedom on the Menu* by Carole Boston Weatherford, illustrated by Jerome LaGarrigue, 2007 ● *The Story of Ruby Bridges* by Robert Coles, illustrated by George Ford, 1995 ● *A Sweet Smell of Roses* by Angela Johnson, illustrated by Eric Velazquez, 2007 ● *Climbing Lincoln's Steps: The African American Journey* by Suzanne Slade, illustrated by Colin Bootman, 2016
April	April: Women's Rights	
May	May: What is Normal?	Review of literature from the year

I observed 34 texts presented as interactive read alouds in Ms. Smith's classroom over the academic year. There were certain texts that Ms. Smith spent up to two to three days reading, discussing, and engaging students in reader response. For example, Ms. Smith focused on *The Colors of Us* by Karen Katz (1999) for two consecutive read aloud events. On the second day, she asked the students to really think about their own skin color, like the characters in the book, and compose a self-portrait that they felt

realistically portrayed their skin color. This list of 34 texts included a variety of genres and modalities; however, for the most part, Ms. Smith read picture books to the students, as did Ms. Martinez. Ms. Barker read both picture books and chapter books to her class; therefore, she often spent weeks at time reading the same text to her students (e.g., *Wonder* by RJ Palacio (2012)).

Each teacher strove to include diverse voices (e.g., books written by authors of color) through their selection of multicultural children's literature. According to statistics posted by the Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC), of the 3,369 books received by the CCBC from US publishers, approximately 21% of them were written by authors of color, specifically African American, American Indian/First Nations, Asian Pacifics/Asian Pacific Americans, and Latinx. In the last decade, the percentage of books written by authors of color has doubled in the United States. Of the 34 books that I observed Ms. Smith read aloud, 12/34 were by authors of color (35%) and 17/34 (50%) were by illustrators of color. My analysis revealed similar patterns in Ms. Martinez's and Ms. Barker's efforts to incorporate literature authored and illustrated by people of color (Ms. Martinez and Ms. Smith, Text Selection Tables, Appendices).

These three teachers thought about how each book they selected supported the focus of the unit. They also thought about how the books within each text worked together to provide multiple perspectives and support students' development of critical sociocultural knowledge on topics of equity, race, class, gender, immigration, and more. For example, early in the year, Ms. Smith sought to disrupt the social construct of race with her students. While reading Katz's (1999) *The Colors of Us*, she and the students discussed how and why people are the color that they are (e.g., ancestry, melanin, and place of origin). Ms. Smith explained to a group of teachers at the end of the year how she uses literature to introduce critical ideas about race and diversity:

> I start with a book like *The Colors of Us*. We start off right away on day one talking about race because kids get it. They see there is no colorblind. That's just weird and wrong and a lie. So, we acknowledge it [color] and, and I think as adults we're very awkward. Okay. I won't say we—[instead] White people generally are very weird and awkward. And, talking about race is, can be difficult for most White people. And with kids it's the complete opposite because they just, it's, it's a given. So we normalize that. We talk about it. We look at the beautiful shades of our skin. I've got several books that I read at the beginning of the year, and we just start noticing it. We build things with Play-doh—I bring art into it. Another one I do at the beginning of the year is *The Best Part of Me*—it helps us notice ourselves and what makes us special. We write about it, and we share it. But I just pull in all kinds of books about different families… So, I feel like this work is also about humanizing ourselves—our students. And that model helps them do the same in this world, and they notice it—when people are being dehumanized. [Transcript, May 2018]

Multicultural children's literature was at the heart of these teachers' critical pedagogies. Here, Ms. Smith demonstrates her commitment to reading many books together with students for the purpose of "noticing" many different types of lives and lived experiences, learning to "normalize" them as part of the larger and grander story of our world, and ultimately perceiving each member of our community, society, and world through a "humanizing" lens. Through this instruction, Ms. Smith hopes, students will learn to notice when people are being dehumanized and find the courage to take action against that dehumanization.

Ms. Barker's preparation of the *Signs and Symbols* unit offers further insight into how these teachers' thoughts on the role of literature grew and evolved over time. In this situation, Ms. Barker recalled that many of the picture books she had shared in the past featured "different types of characters from all over the place" [Interview 2 Transcript], addressing contexts including Japanese internment, the lives of migrant farm workers, the attacks on September 11, child labor, and the Holocaust. However, she also felt that this text set made up of historical and realistic fiction left many of the students' questions

unanswered. Therefore, she had decided to revise the texts and approach this year. She recalled,

> And, so I guess in planning this unit this year, I was like, 'How am I going to address all of the questions that they always have?" And so that's when I came up with the idea to - and actually I think I was perusing News ELA [online periodical for K-12 students], and I was like, "Oh! this has, you know, articles about the Japanese internment camps, what else do they have?" And I was like, "Oh my gosh, how perfect would that be to pair that text [News ELA article] with this [picture book]?" That'll answer a lot of their questions that they're having and like I can't answer all of them and you know? So I thought, and then I went back and forth, do I do the picture book first or the article? [Ms. Barker, Interview 2 Transcript, January 2018]

Ms. Barker decided to present the picture book first followed by the article because she felt that this sequence would best support students by answering some of the questions they had generated during the picture book read aloud. *News ELA* was a new resource that Ms. Barker was learning about at the time; she expressed appreciation for its quality of writing and its focus on how historical events influence current events, which Ms. Barker felt was important to emphasize with her students.

Based on their selection criteria and purposes for reading multicultural children's literature to their students, it is evident that Ms. Martinez, Ms. Barker, and Ms. Smith were not merely *adding on* (Banks, 1993; 1994; 2014) to the curriculum. Rather, they were transforming their curriculum by engaging their students in daily conversations with these texts and the diverse writers who had authored them. The teachers selected the literature with great care. The students were immersed in a variety of genres; however, the common thread among all of the literature selected for the interactive read aloud in these three classrooms was that the literature served as the primary resource for teachers to teach their students critical sociocultural knowledge.

In response to the literature, the teachers expected the students to make meaning within, beyond, and about the text (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006). The teachers did this work of meaning-making with their students on a daily basis as a primary method of enacting critical approaches during literacy instruction. In doing so, they called the supposedly "neutral" (Apple, 2004) context of the public school into question. Instead, Ms. Smith, Ms. Barker, and Ms. Martinez demonstrated through their themes, yearlong curriculum, text selections, and facilitation of literature discussions that school was actually a political space, as well as a perfect space to engage in contemporary local and global political issues. By reading aloud books authored by people from diverse backgrounds, these teachers showed their students that there are countless stories that will always inform and build on each other, and this knowledge is likely what Banks envisioned as transformative for students.

Students' resistance to narratives in multicultural children's literature. Even with this tool of multicultural children's literature on their side, these three critical educators experienced numerous challenges as they reimagined the possibilities of interactive read aloud. The teachers were grateful for these resources as an integral part of the yearlong curriculum through which they sought to expand students' critical sociocultural knowledge, but they also understood that the books could not do all of the work for them. Ms. Smith, Ms. Barker, and Ms. Martinez recognized their own responsibility to guide and facilitate the conversations that occurred in response to the literature. According to the scholarship that examines the teacher's role in facilitating discussions, the teacher's knowledge of how to facilitate literature discussions that are authentic and equitable is key to the success of drawing on this tool (e.g., Jordan & Santori, 2015; Moje & Lewis, 2007).

These teachers understood that the enactment of critical pedagogies is a dynamic process (Freire, 1970/2000; Giroux, 2012); accordingly, they made many decisions in the moment regarding how to navigate class discussions of multicultural children's literature. In Chapter Six, I describe how the teachers extended students' talk towards criticality; however, I also want to emphasize that these conversations did not always initially move towards criticality, because the students were naturally guided by their own pre-existing sociocultural knowledge as they responded to the literature. There were times during discussions when the students resisted a different perspective, voice, or experience.

The following example, from Ms. Barker's whole group discussion on Reynold's *Ghost* (2016) in November 2017, illustrates the challenges that arose for these teachers, specifically in regards to contemporary issues (e.g., racism, poverty, gender discrimination). Ms. Barker admitted before reading *Ghost* (2016) to her class that she felt uncomfortable sharing some aspects of this book with her students because it engages with multiple intersecting sociocultural issues, including race, class, gender, family, drugs, and healthcare. She expressed uncertainty [Field Notes; Ms. Barker, Interview Two, January 2018] about her own ability to navigate the talk that this book would generate, as well as nervousness about discussing current-day forms of inequity in the context of this particular wealthy, predominantly White school. She worried about what the students' parents would say or think [Field Notes, October 2017]. Nonetheless, Ms. Barker expressed her commitment to giving *Ghost* (2016) a try because she felt the book was relevant, necessary, and powerful in this political moment.

Briefly, *Ghost* (2016) by Jason Reynolds is the first book in his four-part series about a group of four young people who become friends on the local community track team. The four kids, Ghost, Lu, Sunny, and Patina, are all African American, and they all come from diverse walks of life. In this book, we meet all four of these young friends, but

the story centers on Ghost, a seventh grader, and his life with his mom, his life in school, and his life on the track team. Ghost and his mom have survived trauma, and now, he is trying to find his place in society. At the climax, Ghost decides to steal a pair of new running shoes from an athletic store because his high tops are just not working on the track. Ghost knows his mom would do anything for him, but he does not want to ask her for one more thing, so he solves the problem himself—but now he has created a number of challenges that he has to face.

Kumashiro (2001) notes that "Using texts as ways to know Others will always work against oppression in contradictory ways" (p. 7). The students in Ms. Barker's class came to school with some sociocultural knowledge on issues of race, class, gender, families, and more. Many of the students in Ms. Barker's class initially expressed ideas that seemed to draw on perspectives from dominant narratives. For example, I observed students expressing ideas such as "when someone steals something, s/he should go to jail or get punished" and "when someone starts a fight in school, s/he needs to be suspended." As Ms. Barker worked to make sense of where the students' thinking was coming from, she attributed it to the fact that many of them had "highly educated parents with stable jobs," and as a result, in her view, they lived "privileged" lives. Therefore, according to Ms. Barker, they seemed to have somewhat fixed perspectives on justice that aligned with dominant narratives on justice. These perspectives reinforce dominant narratives because they treat all acts of rule-breaking as if they were the same, rather than considering that individuals may be driven to these acts by circumstances beyond their control—circumstances directly related to sociocultural inequity and oppression. Kumashiro (2001) notes that sometimes one's partial knowledge of the Other can impede their movement towards anti-oppressive perspectives. However, I do not intend to make the case that only White students from privileged backgrounds would respond this way to

Ghost's decision to steal shoes. In reality, plenty of non-privileged people with little or no education hold these same views. That doesn't mean they're not part of the dominant narratives; I'm just pointing out that it's not only privileged people who hold them. The text is complicated, and therefore, the discussions with this text should also be complicated. I can envision many students, from many diverse backgrounds, especially in the context of school, expressing their disapproval for Ghost's decisions and actions. The dominant narratives, inherent in the context of school, often works off a good-bad binary, and all of us (administrators, teachers, students) must learn to resist this binary in order to stop the perpetuation of profiling and stereotypes (Apple, 2004). The following example illuminates the challenges that Ms. Barker faced during an exchange with a student.

During this read aloud, the students and Ms. Barker were discussing the scene in which the protagonist, Ghost, steals a pair of running shoes from a sporting goods store. Over the past couple of days, the class had discussed previous events in the book. At this point in the story, Ghost had just unexpectedly been recruited to a local track team. All of the other kids on the team had running shoes, and Ghost only had a big, heavy pair of high-tops that were hard to run in. Ghost tried to make his shoes better by cutting the tops off of his shoes, but that made them worse, and he did not want to burden his mom with his desire for new shoes because he knew she was doing everything she could to support them. He also knew that his mom would sacrifice a lot and find a way to buy him new shoes, and Ghost did not want to add more to his mom's worries.

As Ms. Barker was listening to students think out loud about Ghost's decision to steal shoes, Gavin, a White boy, who was always an active contributor during the whole group literature discussion, asked whether Ghost would go to jail for stealing the shoes. He seemed to be grappling with disbelief that Ghost had not yet been caught or punished.

He worked to understand why Ghost had not been punished by distinguishing fictional stories from real life:

> Gavin: In the book, the main character will not go to jail unless it is about him escaping like if it was like a real life book type of thing—one, he'd be kicked out of school for punching him. Two, you'd already go to jail for getting - caught in the security cameras and alarms. But, book rules, I do not think he is going to go to jail—[inaudible] or if he breaked out through, he is probably not gonna go to jail, like a main character. Running on the track and they call him Ghost, and then just go to jail? [Transcript of Read Aloud, November 2017]

Gavin shared this thinking in the first few minutes of the read aloud event, and it was consistent with the opinions he had expressed over the previous couple of days [Video-recordings]: Ghost should have been caught (security cameras and alarms), and Ghost should go to jail. Grappling with the fact that this character had not gotten caught was a critical encounter for Gavin; he repeatedly talked and asked about it until this moment, when he attempted to calm his surprise and disbelief by explaining that the unusual mercy Ghost experienced was something that only happens to heroes in books ("book rules"), but not in *real life.* As he thought aloud, Gavin was trying to preserve his view of the world – a somewhat simple view that seemed to follow a more generalized belief that people who break rules always go to jail.

I identify this moment, and similar moments experienced by Gavin and his peers, as critical encounters (DeNicolo & Franquiz, 2006) or instances of crisis (Kumashiro, 2001). Such moments could potentially have served as transformative experiences (DeNicolo & Franquiz, 2006) by prompting the students to disrupt their existing sociocultural knowledge. In this case, Gavin's existing knowledge was likely shaped by dominant narratives that normalize the criminalization and *adultification* of young black boys. Based on the work of DeNicolo and Franquiz (2006), Ms. Barker could have facilitated a more transformative experience if she had responded to Gavin's surprise and

inquiry by framing Ghost's actions as a response to the systemic racism and oppression endured by the African American people, thereby guiding Gavin towards a more critical and humanizing stance. Instead, in this moment and others, Ms. Barker improvised a way to extend Gavin's talk by acknowledging that fiction versus real-life experiences can indeed work differently. She responded,

> Ms. Barker: So you're kind of thinking about real life experiences related to book experiences that you've had, and from your knowledge of what you've read, characters and storylines tend to go a certain way in a book versus in real life.
>
> Gavin: I was thinking like how could he go to jail. Unless he was like he visits jail or any part, then he gets caught in jail,
>
> Ms. Barker: I see what you're saying. It'll be interesting to see how it turns out then and see if that's aligned with what we, what our experiences with books, see if it actually goes along with how books usually happen.
>
> Gavin: I think he is going to still be involved with track... [Transcript of Read Aloud, November 2017]

Ms. Barker validated Gavin's ideas ("I see what you're saying"), and she situated this exchange as a moment of learning about how literature works. Ms. Barker allowed the conversation between herself and Gavin to end here. In this moment, Ms. Barker decided to welcome Gavin's perspective, and it was evident in other similar moments throughout the year that Gavin felt comfortable enough to voice his thinking in the context of this classroom. Ms. Barker valued Gavin's voice, even when he did not adopt the perspective she hoped he would.

Ms. Barker was committed to empowering all of her students' voices, and this need paired with her need to teach for social justice often came to a head when the students in her classroom voiced socially conservative opinions in response to the multicultural literature during the discussion. In this moment, Ms. Barker never questioned or refuted or wondered with her students about whether it was appropriate for

a sixth-grade boy to experience incarceration; nor did she remind the students of the complex feelings Ghost expressed when making this hasty decision to steal the shoes. Reynolds intended to present Ghost's story with love, complexity, and nuance [Personal Conversation with Jason Reynolds, October 2017]. When Ms. Barker chose not to disrupt Gavin's thinking, she was likely caught in her own discomfort regarding whether or not it is ever acceptable for a teacher to suggest that stealing is justifiable to a classroom full of fourth-graders.

As reported in Chapter Four, I recognized Ms. Barker's decision to read Reynold's *Ghost* (2016) as crisis; she told me that she had never read a book like it to her students before. In our second interview, Ms. Barker described how different it felt to read a book like Curtis's *Bud, Not Buddy* (1999) (historical fiction about Civil Rights). I interpreted this to mean that Ms. Barker recognized that *Ghost* brought up race, class, and gender in a manner that was more controversial and potentially troubling than other books about racial issues. *Ghost* is a political text set in the present day, and discussing the content from this text still made Ms. Barker uncomfortable, particularly at Village Elementary. For example, Ms. Barker referenced a conversation she and the students had about Ghost's dad, who was an alcoholic, abusive, and incarcerated. She explained the tension she was feeling during the discussion:

> So, I feel like I have to hold myself to a very high standard and model that – So, like, this conversation came up, what was it? Oh, it was related to Ghost and how his dad was an alcoholic and beat them. And there was a kid [in the class] and she was like, "Well, that's why I'm never ever going to drink ever." And it's like I can't tell you if you have one or two drinks in moderation and are responsible and get a designated driver to drive you home, then you'll be fine. Like I can't say that. So, I feel like I have to take like the total abstinence position on everything because—you know what I mean? And I think it's because of this age too, you know, like if I taught high school that I could have that conversation…[Interview 2 Transcript, January 2018]

I return to my findings in Chapter Four for a moment to make sense of Ms. Barker's response to Gavin and the other students more broadly. Ms. Barker sustained and grew her enactment mostly in in-school contexts. In other words, Ms. Barker's work as a critical educator was primarily in her role as teacher, and she had not participated in community activism in the ways Ms. Smith and Ms. Martinez had. Since Ms. Barker was still working on crossing through the barrier of school as a critical educator, she may have felt the constraints of the institution more strongly than the other teachers as she improvised during students' critical encounters with a text like *Ghost* (2016). I do want to note that later in this discussion, as well as the next morning, Ms. Barker did ask the students to consider their neighborhood and socioeconomic status in relation to Ghost's. In other words, she never gave up on her work as a critical educator; she worked through this moment of crisis in order to grow her enactment of critical pedagogies.

My analysis indicated that the teachers' in- and out- of school approaches to sustain and grow critical pedagogies, described in Chapter Four, influenced their uptake of the multicultural children's literature with their students. The teachers' navigation of conversations about this literature was informed by their own stance as critical educators. For example, when Ms. Smith and Ms. Martinez had pushed through the barriers of the institution and disrupted the dominant narrative of Whiteness and power as activists outside of school, these experiences may have made them more willing to use the books in more politically charged ways. For example, Ms. Smith shared in our final interview,

> I'm asked a lot to give a list of diverse texts or critical texts. There is no such thing. Every book is an opportunity. And so it depends on what you do with that book. A teacher can't just pick up a book, for example, *Separate Is Never Equal* (Tonatiuh, 2014) and just read the words. That's, that's not what it's about. It's about the, the conversations that we have. How do we dig into it? How do we bring out these pieces that are going to help our kids really, you know, see a

> different side of it, a different perspective. So, every book has an opportunity to disrupt the status quo. [Interview 4 Transcript, June 2018]

Ms. Smith, as an activist, positioned all books as opportunities to question and disrupt the status quo with her students, as did Ms. Martinez. Ms. Barker expressed more uncertainty about when and how far to push, but she too was trying to do so. I conclude that the teachers needed different things from their books. Ms. Barker and Ms. Martinez positioned themselves in front of the texts—and set out to do critical readings with their students of all texts. In contrast, Ms. Barker positioned herself, in a sense, behind the texts. In other words, she generally aimed to select books that had a clearer message of right and wrong, yet at the same time immersed students in multiple perspectives and diverse life experiences [Interview 1, September 2017]. *Ghost* (2016), for example, was a text that required a lot of heavy lifting from the teacher to support students in considering the macro- and micro-level inequities faced by the African American community. It was the book that Ms. Barker knew she wanted to try out to grow her enactment of critical approaches; however, as she expressed many times, it was a very hard experience for her as a teacher.

Summary. All three teachers used multicultural literature as tools to generate critical discussions and support their students' development of critical sociocultural knowledge. Each teacher positioned these texts in different ways in relation to the critical content/discussions, as well as her own expertise or position. In the next section, I present another strategy I observed all three teachers implementing to reimagine the possibilities of read alouds and cultivate their students' critical sociocultural knowledge: *drawing on the tools and language of geography*. Ms. Barker, Ms. Martinez, and Ms. Smith incorporated explicit instruction on global geography. They did so in order to bridge local

and global contexts, and to support their students in reading the world by reading the word (Freire, 1970/2000).

Drawing on the tools and language of geography. Ms. Smith, Ms. Barker, and Ms. Martinez taught their students world geography through the use of maps, globes, and their talk during interactive read aloud. This aspect of the teachers' instruction could be perceived as informal, in the sense that the students were not formally assessed about their world geography knowledge during this instructional period. However, I argue that even though it was informal, this instruction was intentional. By drawing on the language of geography, the teachers worked towards the greater goals of the yearlong curriculum and classroom themes, which they had designed as critical educators. As Ms. Martinez stated in our third interview,

> …. the reason I teach them about Gandhi, you're like, "Well, why are you thinking about Gandhi? He's in India. What do these kids in San Marcos, you know, why would they care?" Because I tell them - because ideas travel, and Gandhi's ideas of nonviolent protest influence Martin Luther King, and they all influence Cesar Chavez and we love our Cesar Chavez, you know? (laughs quietly) And they [global leaders] give us [students and Ms. Martinez] a plan, a plan of how we can have change in a systematic way. I mean—it's going to take a while. It takes a lot of work. It takes a lot of effort, but it's peaceful and it's nonviolent. That's why we learned about Gandhi. He's a model. We've learned about role models all over the world. What plan did they put in place and how can that change our lives? [Interview 3 Transcript, April, 2018]

Here, Ms. Martinez helped me to understand how and why she bridges local and global movements, leaders, and countries for her first-grade students. In this section, I analyze the work Ms. Martinez, Ms. Smith, and Ms. Barker did to make their themes that inherently aimed to support the students in developing a sense of the world and their role in this world. The teachers intended to guide the students towards kindness, empathy, and global citizenship with a curriculum that did not advocate for tolerance alone, but instead embraced differences as beautiful and necessary.

In the above excerpt, Ms. Martinez highlighted one of her approaches to bridging local and global contexts in the classroom. Ms. Martinez presented global leaders' stories because she thought it was important for her students, who were mostly of Mexican heritage, to not only know the story of Cesar Chavez, but to also learn that Cesar Chavez stood on the shoulders of others who came before him, from different walks of life, from different places, who faced different challenges. At the same time, these leaders all had one thing in common: they fought for change for their people using nonviolent approaches. Ms. Martinez did not want her students to know only one of those leaders or stories (e.g., Cesar Chavez in America); she wanted them to leave first grade with an understanding that leaders all over the world have made change through peaceful protest. Furthermore, Ms. Martinez situated these leaders as models for her students. Their stories served as road maps on their journey to becoming agents of change. Ms. Martinez, Ms. Smith, and Ms. Barker positioned their students from the very beginning of the year as people who could and would make change for the better.

Ms. Smith started the year by having the students inquire into their own lives; she started locally. She wanted them to ask themselves, "What makes me a wonder?" and "What is my heritage?" and "How are we the same? And, how are we different?" [Field Notes, August 21 - 24]. As part of the whole group lesson in response to Katz's (1999) *The Colors of Us*, a lesson I have previously referenced in earlier sections, Ms. Smith and the students were discussing the range of skin colors in their class. As she read the book aloud, Ms. Smith had a globe at the table next to her.

Figure 5.4. Ms. Smith reading and discussing *The Colors of Us* (Katz, 1999).

At the end of the read aloud, Ms. Smith placed the globe in the center of their whole group meeting area and asked the students to stand around the globe. They began an extended conversation about how skin color can be determined by where you come from. In other words, Ms. Smith explained that people who live near the equator have more "melanin" in their skin, and as a result, their skin is darker. I share an excerpt of this conversation below:

> Ms. Smith: So our skin has something called melanin, and melanin protects us from the sun. And some people have more melanin. If you have more melanin, your skin is browner… United States is made up of people from all over the world, right? Who were the first people that were here before anyone ever came? You can say it out loud.
>
> Students: Native Americans.
>
> Ms. Smith: Native Americans were in America before everyone else came afterwards. So, when we think about our skin color and we think about melanin, I think about my ancestors, and I think about where my ancestors came from. They did not come from United States. They came from other places. Look at this; this is our equator. It's an imaginary line that runs around the center of our Earth. The

> Sun shines the brightest and the hardest on this equator. It hits directly in this section—right here (pointing at the equator). So the countries that are in this section, closer to the equator, they get the most direct sunlight. So people who live in those areas, their skin had to be protected from the sun. So where do you think people with darker color skin lived?
>
> Students: Asia [inaudible]
>
> Ms. Smith: Near the equator. Yeah. Let's see. Let's see. So, I see Borneo and I see the continent of Africa—look at that—a lot of the continent of Africa, India...
>
> Students: South America.
>
> Ms. Smith: South America. Yeah. So, you're noticing. So, we're noticing that along this area, this is where a lot of people who had dark skin lived a long time ago. So, I want you to think about where your ancestors might have been from, and it gives you a little bit of a clue to help understand by looking at your skin color. [Transcript of Read Aloud, August 2017]

Ms. Smith invited the students to ask their families that evening about their ancestry, or heritage. Her class continued this conversation over the next few days, using the globe as a tool to point out the various countries and continents their families were from. In this conversation and others that followed, Ms. Smith established important big ideas with the students. First, we live in a big world with many large masses of land (e.g., continents and countries) and water. Second, all of our ancestors came from somewhere other than the Unites States, unless we are of Native American ancestry. Third, there are many different skin colors in this world because of where we come from– and there is not one shade of White, Black, or Brown. During this conversation, Ms. Smith and the students named places around the world; Ms. Smith's goal was for students to leave this conversation with the understanding that they were not all only from America. By recognizing that their ancestors were from all over the world, the students could consider how they were already global citizens. Another of Ms. Smith's goals was to complicate and bring nuance to the concept of race, and she concluded this lesson as follows:

> Ms. Smith: Look at my skin. When somebody asks me what my race is—sometimes I have to write that on forms—race is a really strange thing... So, when you talk about race, some people say, "Oh, I'm White," or, "Oh, I'm Black," or "Oh, I'm Brown." They might have different names for saying that, but is anyone really white? Is anyone really black?
>
> Students: No!
>
> Ms. Smith: We're all kinds of shades of brown. So, that whole race thing is kind of weird to me. [Transcript of Read Aloud, August 2017]

Ms. Smith sought to distinguish between skin color and the social construct of race in America. As stated previously, this lesson, which took place during the entire first week of school, set the stage for the students to think about the world as much larger than their community. Across all of the units, the students navigated global geography to understand events from the past and the present, the connections across locations and spaces, as well as their roles and responsibilities as global citizens.

Ms. Barker thought of her class as multicultural. In September, Ms. Barker described why she chose to read mostly multicultural children's literature in class:

> I have kids that are from all parts of Asia and Europe and here and South America. I think it's important for them to get to see themselves in books, but then also get to see people that are different from them and not only being in those situations where they're always at a deficit, but just being a regular person and a regular kid, you know?... Here's a story about a kid in a school, a regular situation that these kids would all experience and the character happens to be a different race than them. I want them to see other people as we have so many similarities between people that connect us. I think it's important for them to understand that. [Interview 1 Transcript, September 2017]

Ms. Barker kept a map of the world in the front of her room, and she referenced it often during whole group literature discussions. She valued teaching students the importance of kindness and empathy, and she hoped that the students would learn to feel these as they recognized the "similarities between people" across the world. Ms. Barker used the map to show students mirrors and windows (Bishop, 1991)—the places the students in the

class were from, and the new places where the literary characters were from—in order to help students link their own experiences to those of other people from around the world.

Ms. Barker led a read aloud of *Running Shoes* (Lipp, 2008), a book set in Cambodia about Sophy, a young girl who is unable to attend school because it is far away and she does not own shoes. During this read aloud, Ms. Barker and the students paid significant attention to the place and culture in the story. Instead of reading as a whole group in a circle on the floor, Ms. Barker projected this picture book on her document camera. As part of the book introduction, Ms. Barker and the students read the title and examined the illustrations on the cover and the end page to try to get a sense of what the book was about, as well as its setting. The students determined that the book was probably set in Asia for a variety of reasons, including the images of rice farmers and the row of shoes that were lined up outside a house. Ms. Barker explained to the students,

> I will say in a lot of Asian cultures it is respectful to take your shoes off before you enter a home because your shoes are dirty. Does anyone take off their shoes at the front of the house? It is OK if you do not. For some people, it is just a norm of their culture. For example, when I lived in Singapore, that is an Asian culture, there a lot of different Asian cultures—for the culture in Singapore—it was proper to take off your shoes when you entered somebody's home. And, so there are lots of cultures that do that—and so, that could be another clue that this book takes place somewhere in Asia because we are seeing all of these shoes here. [Video-recording, Read Aloud, Running Shoes, February 22, 2018]

In response to Ms. Barker's question, only a few students raised their hands. However, this example illustrates how Ms. Barker bridged the students' experiences to global contexts across the year. This moment served as a mirror for a few of the students, and a window for most of the students in the class. Ms. Barker reassured the students that it was okay if their families did not use this practice at home, but that this practice was part of many world cultures. Ms. Barker was also careful to avoid reducing Asia to just one culture/one people/one story. A few minutes later, the students and Ms. Barker were still

trying to determine the exact country where this story was taking place; therefore, Ms. Barker was emphasizing to the students that Asia itself is not a country. The following conversation occurred between Ms. Barker and the students:

> Ms. Barker: So, we have some more clues here that the author has given that shows us where this story might take place.
>
> Students: Vietnam [other ideas inaudible]
>
> Student J: It is very hot and very rainy. So, I am guessing it is in Southeast Asia. *Ms. Barker gets up and goes to the world map to show the location of Southeast Asia.*

Ms. Barker: Possibly Southeast Asia, and we know that a lot of the countries in Southeast Asia are very close to the equator. And we know that in countries that are close to the equator, it is very, very hot. There is not a lot of change in seasons. It will be hot, hot, hot, and then it will be rainy, and then it will go right back to being hot. So, Southeast Asia...so, here is the continent of Asia, which has many, many different cultures and countries. And, then Southeast Asia is right here. And like Student J pointed out, it is probably in Southeast Asia because that is right along the equator, and it is where they experience that kind of weather. So, it could be somewhere like Thailand; it could be Philippines; it could be Vietnam, even - so, hopefully we will get some more clues - so, we will know exactly where it is.

Figure 5.5. Ms. Barker pointing to Southeast Asia on classroom world map.

After Student J shared his thinking, Ms. Barker got up from her seat and referenced the world map. At the start of the lesson, it was clear that Ms. Barker planned to attend to geography as they explored this book. Walking to the map to respond to Student J's prediction about Southeast Asia was an act of improvisation (Brown, 2013). Ms. Barker used the map as a tool to trace the clues the author had provided in the book, as well as the clues that Student J referenced as signs that the book may be set in Southeast Asia. Ms. Barker added further details about Southeast Asia's proximity to the equator, and she then named some countries in this region. Within about six minutes, Ms. Barker and the students had moved from conceptualizing the geography of Asia from macro (continent) to micro (specific countries)—from "Asia" to "Southeast Asia" to "Thailand/ the Philippines/ Vietnam." During this lesson Ms. Barker was supporting her students to recognize the specificity of other cultures and nations. As a critical educator, Ms. Barker modeled for her students how to take time and care in valuing the uniqueness of cultures

around the world. In this interaction with her students, Ms. Barker pushed back with her students against dominant narratives that represent "Asia" or "Asian" as monolithic. For Ms. Barker making global contexts accessible to her students through literature, maps, and discussions was an important aspect of her work as a critical educator.

CONCLUSION

Based on my analysis, I concluded that these teachers' daily classroom routines of interactive read aloud paired with their carefully designed curricula enabled them to address critical sociocultural knowledge and issues of inequity together with their students each day. During my analysis, I turned to Banks' (1993; 1994) model of multicultural education, specifically the transformation approach, in order to understand the possibilities of this type of curriculum when it is enacted each day. At the level of transformative instruction, teachers changed the structure of the curriculum with "the infusion of various perspectives, frames of reference, and content from various groups, that will extend students' understandings of the nature, development, and complexity of U.S. Society" (1993, p. 2). These three critical educators required their students and themselves to engage with the perspectives of diverse ethnic and cultural groups on a daily basis across the academic year. In Chapter Six, I report on the teachers' strategies for facilitating critical conversations in response to multicultural children's literature.

Chapter 6: Teachers' Facilitation of Critical Conversations

INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, I reported on how Ms. Martinez, Ms. Barker, and Ms. Smith reimagined the possibilities of the interactive read aloud in the elementary classroom. Rather than using the interactive read aloud primarily as a way to teach comprehension strategies, they reimagined it as a way to cultivate students' critical sociocultural knowledge by engaging them in discussions about issues of inequity across the entire academic year. Chapter Five focused on teachers' strategies of planning and preparing interactive read aloud events; those strategies include developing a yearlong curriculum with units of study organized by sociocultural topics and establishing a daily routine. In this chapter, I shift focus to examine how Ms. Smith, Ms. Martinez, and Ms. Barker supported the literature discussion component during interactive read aloud events. In other words, this chapter explores how the teachers facilitated critical conversations with their students as part of their enactment of critical pedagogies.

At the heart of the multiple critical pedagogical frameworks that I outlined in Chapter Two—including critical literacy, multicultural education, culturally relevant pedagogy, culturally sustaining pedagogy, and anti-oppressive education—there is a shared expectation that students should be active participants in their own development of critical sociocultural knowledge. Proponents of critical pedagogies perceive students as key participants who engage in dialogic critical inquiry with their peers and teachers for the purpose of maintaining and sustaining their own cultural competence, as well as learning to recognize, question, and disrupt dominant narratives.

These three teachers recognized that it was not enough for the students to only listen to the literature or only listen to the teacher; rather, the students needed to voice

their own responses to the literature and talk with each other about sociocultural topics such as discrimination, immigration, gender, race, and civil rights. Interestingly, as a result of the teachers implementing a yearlong curriculum focused on sociocultural topics and making interactive read alouds a daily event, the discussions quickly began to feel continuous across days, weeks, months, and the year. In other words, since Ms. Barker, Ms. Martinez, and Ms. Smith took a transformation approach (Banks, 1993; 1994; 2014) and established a daily routine for this work, the borders of the classroom conversations during interactive read aloud seemed to blur, and the many individual discussions grew into a collective conversation that was built upon each day—sometimes with the same book for many days, and sometimes with a new book each day. Through these yearlong literature discussions in response to a broad range of multicultural children's literature, as well as each other's thinking, the students learned to take critical stances in the context of school. I observed evidence that the students' sociocultural knowledge was developing into critical sociocultural knowledge as a result of interactive read aloud and the literature discussions.

In response to two guiding research questions, "How do teachers address critical sociocultural knowledge and issues of inequity?" and "How do critical educators navigate critical encounters during interactive read aloud?" this chapter presents findings in two sections: 1) teachers extending talk towards criticality; and 2) teachers turning discourse back to the students. The first section illuminates how the teachers guided the students' talk towards criticality during the read aloud event using two approaches: book introductions and welcoming political discourse. In the second section, I identify three substructures that these teachers implemented within the interactive read aloud to foreground their students' voices: small group collaborations, independent reading responses, and "turn and talk." By incorporating these substructures within read aloud

events, the teachers encouraged students to interact with the books and with each other in a range of settings. These interactive conversations disrupted the traditional power hierarchy of teacher and student (Freire, 1970/2000) and fostered the development of co-teaching/co-learner relationships.

TEACHERS EXTENDING TALK TOWARDS CRITICALITY

The literature indicates that K-12 students in the context of public school can take up sociocultural issues from critical perspectives and are willing to speak back in order to question and disrupt the status quo (e.g., Copenhaver-Johnson et al., 2007; DeNicolo & Franquiz, 2006; Enciso, 1997; Michael-Luna, 2008; Souto-Manning, 2009). Across these studies, the teachers were sharing multicultural children's literature with their students, most of whom identified as students of color, and the researchers' intentions were to learn about how multicultural literature can serve as a "mirror" (Bishop, 1991) for students of color. Bishop (1991) defined her metaphor of *mirror* as when "literature transforms human experiences and reflects them back to us, and in that we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience" (p. 1). In many of these studies, students of color had little to no experience in seeing reflections of themselves culturally or racially in the context of school, and teachers and scholars were inquiring into the power of this tool of culturally conscious literature (Sims-Bishop, 1982) or diverse literature (Thomas, 2016) as a resource that could support students and teachers to engage with each other on sociocultural issues in authentic and generative ways. However, these studies focused more on the interactions between the students and the texts (Rosenblatt, 1982). This focus leaves a gap in the scholarship regarding how teachers facilitate discussions about this literature in order to enable students to respond not only to the literature but also to the world from critical perspectives. In this study, I

observed the teachers and students extending talk towards critical perspectives or what I refer to as criticality. In this study I define criticality as the enactment of being critical (Freire, 1970/2000; Janks, 2010) in response to interrogating the inequities experienced by the Other (Kumashiro, 2001).

By examining how teachers facilitated conversations among a range of students, including White students, my study addresses a gap in literature described in Chapter Two. Since much of the research in this area takes place with students of color, there is little research on how White students respond to multicultural literature, which serves as a "window" in Bishop's (1991) terms. According to scholars of the critical frameworks that I outline in Chapter Two, critical pedagogies are intended to benefit all students—yet we currently have little information on how White students engage in critical conversations about inequity, marginalization, and power. The few studies that exist concluded that White students were generally less comfortable discussing race and were reluctant to recognize the reality of racial inequity (e.g. Flynn, 2012; Glazier & Seo, 2005; Newell, 2017). The three teacher participants were present and engaged throughout the literature discussions; they clearly agreed with Cole's (2003) thinking on the power of student talk to support students' comprehension of complex issues. Furthermore, they embraced their role as facilitators of discussions across these yearlong discussions. This section describes how the teachers facilitated conversations that extended students' talk towards criticality. Specifically, I focus on two approaches to leading discussions: 1) book introductions and 2) welcoming political discourse.

Book Introductions

Early in my data collection, I observed that Ms. Smith, Ms. Barker, and Ms. Martinez used the few minutes before they started reading the text to the students to preview the critical sociocultural knowledge that they wished to reflect and expand on

with the students. I refer to this preliminary instructional time as the book introduction. Labadie, Wetzel, and Rogers (2012) found that teachers' "careful selections of books, use of purposeful prompts, and… willingness to let silence reign during the book introductions" (p. 119) supported students' ability to take on critical perspectives during their guided reading (small group) instruction. Drawing on the work of Labadie et al. (2012), I identify these book introductions as one of the spaces "for designing critical literacy encounters" (p. 119).

Book introductions, according to the teachers, were partly planned and partly improvisational. Analysis indicated that teachers often incorporated their reflections from previous conversations with their students into their book introductions. All three teachers wrote their lesson plans in the form of outlines and bullet points [Artifacts], and these plans did not specify what they would say during the book introductions. However, all three teachers implemented a consistent structure for their talk before each read aloud, and in that regard it was a planned event. The teachers were familiar with the books. According to interviews, they had imagined and designed the units of instructions, including the text sets, and in many instances they had read the books to their previous classes. For each day's book introduction, the teachers often built on previous conversations, and they sometimes revisited ideas they had emphasized during previous read aloud experiences with the same book [Field Notes].

Each book introduction was typically about two to three minutes in length. During this short talk, teachers reminded students of what they had discussed during the previous day's read aloud, a general sense of what that day's book was about, an overview of the problem in the book, and a guiding question for the students to consider throughout the read aloud event. These guiding questions set the stage for the students to approach the text from a critical perspective. This use of questions as a key component of book

introductions supports Kumashiro's (2001) notion that "students can learn to *read texts in critical ways*… since different ways of reading texts have different effects, students can learn to read texts in multiple and anti-oppressive ways" (p. 7). Kumashiro outlines two approaches to critical readings of texts: 1) students can learn to read for silences, and 2) students can learn to question why they desire to read stories that are comforting to them—that is, stories that perpetuate hegemonic frameworks. The teachers I observed used book introductions to guide students to participate in critical readings of the texts being read aloud; accordingly, their questions differed from the typical comprehension questions that are often used to introduce read alouds (e.g., making connections, understanding the author's purpose). Ms. Smith, Ms. Martinez, and Ms. Barker aimed to ask the students to consider "both the said and the unsaid" (Kumashiro, 2001, p. 7) in order to push back against hegemonic aspects of the stories they were reading.

Ms. Martinez would typically post her guiding question(s) on the white board in the front of the room to solidify the focus of the read aloud and discussion. For example, during the week when her class read *Tomás and the Library Lady* (1997) by Pat Mora, Ms. Martinez posed the following three questions in written and oral form on three consecutive days: *What is a good citizen?; What does Tomás think? How does this help him to be a good citizen?; How do good citizens act?*. Although the first-graders probably did not fully appreciate the subversive nature of Ms. Martinez's teaching, through book selections like this one, she was lifting up the voices of the *Other* (Kumashiro, 2001). This week, she chose to lift up the son of migrant farm workers as a "good citizen" in a political moment when the Trump administration was promoting widespread popular demonization of immigrants and border crossing. Ms. Martinez was challenging the dominant narratives' notions of citizenship for her students in the context of school and society. In other words, a good *American* citizen, like Tomás, can be Chicano/a, can

speak Spanish, and can look like them. Ms. Martinez was also encouraging her students to think about the word "citizen" in a broader sense. In other words, even if a person is not legally recognized as a citizen of a country, they can still be a "good citizen" in the ethical sense of being kind and supportive to their fellow community members.

Ms. Martinez's guiding questions shifted slightly each day, but the central idea during this week was for her and the students to consider what it means to be, think, and act like a good citizen. With each successive discussion, Ms. Martinez nudged the students a little bit further towards a critical view of what it means to be a citizen. In this weeklong unit, it was clear based on the students' responses that they did see themselves as good citizens in school and society. Ms. Smith structured her entire semester of interactive read alouds this way. She posted a new guiding question each day and introduced it during the book introduction. With these questions, Ms. Martinez intentionally set the trajectory of talk towards sociocultural issues. She envisioned big discussions for herself and her students during their daily interactive read aloud, and these guiding questions served as the foundation for those discussions.

Ms. Smith and Ms. Barker would share their guiding questions orally, usually at the end of their book introductions. These questions often asked students to consider the book not as a single isolated story, but as part of a much bigger story about sociocultural issues, including narratives of inequity and oppression. For example, the following transcript presents Ms. Smith's introduction of *Fly Away Home* by Eve Bunting (1991), which was part of the text set she curated for her unit on *Hunger, Homelessness, and Poverty*. This scene exemplifies a typical book introduction that established the teacher's planned purpose for the read aloud and informed the students that they need to be prepared for a critical conversation on the topic at hand. The students had just finished a

brief small group activity on stereotypes and assumptions, and now they were sitting on the floor facing Ms. Smith.

> Ms. Smith: What we are thinking about is sometimes the words we use or the things we say when we are talking about groups of people are not always correct. We have to be really careful about that. Otherwise, we are stereotyping—we are making assumptions and generalizations that may not be true and might be hurtful. Just like the generalization when the man in the video [referring to the *Humans of New York* video the class watched the day before] said he doesn't like it when people call him poor because he feels really rich in his life. There is more than one way to be rich—it is a multiple meaning word. Sometimes it means the amount of money that you have—if you have a lot of money. But it also means having a rich life; he had a successful life. (Transcript of Video-recording, December, 2017)

Ms. Smith opened her book introduction by addressing a macro-level inequity—making assumptions and stereotyping—in the local context of the classroom. She seemed to be warning (*we have to be careful*) the students that everyone, including herself, was capable of stereotyping without intentionally seeking to cause harm to others. Next, Ms. Smith reminded the students of the assumptions that a wealthy woman made about the socioeconomic well being of a man in the *Humans of New York* video that the class had watched the previous day, who was an immigrant, father, and cab driver in New York. Here, she reminds the students that there is "more than one way to be rich." Through this opening, Ms. Smith brought the students together as a community of *upstanders*, people committed to trying their best to do the right thing, which included not making assumptions about the quality of another's life. Ms. Smith continued:

> Ms. Smith: I want us to think about that. I want us to think back on how we are talking about specifically—how we are really thinking specifically about people who experience hunger, homelessness, and extreme poverty, and how that is different from what the gentleman [in the video] was talking about. It is different than having tight times and having to make choices. To be honest—we all have to make choices, right Student S? We have to make choices about the things we need and the things we want (hand gesture). We are not talking about that—what we are talking about is extreme situations. And today we are going to be talking

> about a family, Student M. We are talking about a family today that experiences homelessness and this family actually lives in an airport. They do not have a home. So, their shelter is within an airport. I want you to think about how that must feel for the character? And what his life might—must—be like? . (Transcript of Video-recording, December, 2017)

In the next turn, Ms. Smith continued using *we* and *us* in order to include herself as part of the community of problem-posers and problem-solvers. As a critical educator, Ms. Smith deliberately used language that emphasizes the humanity of the people the class was learning about. For example, rather than using a phrase like *the homeless* or *the poor*, Ms. Smith referred to "people who experience hunger, homelessness, and poverty." In addition, Ms. Smith differentiated between people through her book introductions; for instance, the word *extreme* reminded students to recognize the difference between the man featured in the *Humans of New York* video and the homeless woman they had read about two days before in the picture book, *The Lady in the Box* (1997). Ms. Smith stated that the man in the video was not living in extreme conditions, even though that was the assumption made about him by the wealthy customer. Therefore, Ms. Smith was teaching the students that being poor was not a single story (Adichie, 2009), and it did not mean one thing for everyone who might be described that way. According to Ms. Smith, the family portrayed in *Fly Away Home* (1991) was living in an *extreme situation* because they lacked shelter (an identified need). By making a clear distinction between a *shelter* and a *home*, Mrs. Smith named the problem that the family in *Fly Away Home* was dealing with. In Chapter Four, I reported that the teachers aimed to support their students in developing empathy. Here, Ms. Smith cultivated students' empathy by prompting them to imagine how the character of the young child might feel and what his life might be like.

Book introductions served as the teachers' daily opening invitation to point students towards a critical reading (Kumashiro, 2001) of the text at hand. Through guiding questions, the teachers helped students consider the narrative from a critical and humanizing perspective, rather than perpetuating deficit stereotypes about the "Other" (Kumashiro, 2001; 2009). The teachers consistently planned to open their read aloud with a book introduction in order to set the intention of the event, but within this planned introduction, they often improvised based on their reflections from earlier conversations. As reported in Chapter Four, the teachers embraced their own becoming (Freire, 1970/2000) as critical educators; as such, they recognized that students also needed time and guidance for their process of becoming. Ms. Smith, Ms. Barker, and Ms. Martinez used book introductions to simultaneously plant the seeds of students' critical sociocultural knowledge and nurture the ongoing growth of that knowledge.

Welcoming Political Discourse

A key tenet of Kumashiro's (2001) theory of anti-oppressive education is that all stories are political. According to Kumashiro (2001), if teachers frame a book as representing the complete, neutral, politically correct truth, they thereby perpetuate hegemony regarding the "Other" as somehow deficient. As an alternative to this framing, teachers can guide students toward critical readings of the texts in order to disrupt dominant narratives and "change the underlying story" (p. 6), as described in the previous section. Regardless of how a text is situated, according to Kumashiro (2001), the text itself is always political. Furthermore, it is not enough to bring in more voices or different perspectives, unless we are willing to "change the underlying story of the curricular unit and its political effect" (p. 6). To illustrate the different ways in which a story can be framed, Kumashiro describes US narratives about World War II, which often position the United States as

> …the force of good in the face of evil, the men in the United States helped save the world, and women/queers/Japanese Americans were not heroes, victims, or otherwise in this event. Were a teacher to try to cover more perspectives, the unit could expand to include women's, queers', Japanese Americans' voices. But if the expansion rests at saying "these other groups were also there, and now we have the full story," such a move does not really change "the story," at least the story of the United States. And that is the problem. (p. 6)

With this example, Kumashiro distinguishes the practice of adding on multiple perspectives from a more transformation approach to curriculum (Banks, 1993; 1994). If a teacher decides to add the voices of the "Others" who were involved in World War II without disrupting the position of the United States as the "force of good in the face of evil," then students will continue to comply with the hegemonic repetition and perpetuation of that narrative. However, if the teacher incorporates the voice of the "Other" in a way that is meant to "trouble" (Kumashiro, 2001, p. 6) students' existing knowledge, then they provide an opportunity for the "discomforting process of unlearning" (Kumashiro, 2001, p. 8), which can lead to change for both students and teachers. For example, a teacher could adopt this more critical approach by emphasizing that during World War II, the American government forced the relocation of Japanese Americans to internment camps because they wanted to seek revenge on the Japanese for the attack on Pearl Harbor—a story that is often silenced in the context of school.

Ms. Martinez, Ms. Barker, and Ms. Smith presented all stories to their students as political (Kumashiro, 2001). They openly acknowledged the political implications of the stories they taught, and they invited their students to take up those implications during whole group literature discussions. Rather than downplaying or silencing the political nature of the texts that they presented, these teachers insisted that students talk politics in the context of school, using the multicultural literature as a springboard. Throughout the academic year, each teacher, in her own way, welcomed students to push back on the notion of being politically neutral in school. In other words, they presented sociocultural

issues (e.g., race, class, gender) as political topics that had many sides and intersections (Crenshaw, 1991) in local and global contexts, and they were all willing to engage in discussions that "changed the underlying story" (Kumashiro, 2001) of the United States as a place in the world where discrimination only occurred in the past, not the present. Along with these teachers' focus on geography and global issues (described in Chapter Five), these discussions disrupted the notion that America is the only significant nation in the world. The teachers' resistance to repetition of hegemonic narratives regarding the "Other" facilitated the students' "unlearning" (Kumashiro, 2001, p. 8) of those narratives.

Ms. Smith in September 2017 taught an extensive unit on various types of discrimination, including discrimination based on race, gender, religion, and ability. Throughout this unit, she regularly emphasized the importance of talking about things that are not fair and reminded students that we all have a responsibility to take action against unfairness. For example, during her book introduction to the text, *She Persisted* (Clinton, 2017), Ms. Smith opened her read aloud with

> Ms. Smith: We are going to be talking about some things related to rights and opportunities for everyone. And we are going to start noticing these things in our classroom, in our school, and in our community because we want to see when things are not fair, so we can stand up against it. So, we can be an up-stander—
>
> Student: Not being a by-stander
>
> Ms. Smith: Not just standing by and watch something happen. We do something about it. Sometimes that means personally doing something about it, sometimes it means getting an adult to help out, and sometimes it means educating people by teaching them about what is right. Today we are going to talk about a specific kind of discrimination. Discrimination is when you have a bias towards people because of how they look or what gender they are—things that are just a part of people. Discrimination is when you act on that—take some kind of action. This book is about a specific type of discrimination: gender discrimination, discrimination that is specifically against women. [Transcript of Read Aloud, September 2017]

Ms. Smith outlined multiple ways that her third grade students could take action and be "up-standers" against discrimination. First, she named "talking about" rights and unfair treatment as a form of social action in itself, and she asked her students to be aware and willing to call out "things that are not fair." Ms. Smith was inviting her students to be activists both in and out of school, and she was indicating that this classroom community was a space where they could talk about injustices occurring across contexts. This book introduction serves as an example of Ms. Smith's welcoming of—even insistence on—political discourse from her students as up-standers. Even in this early part of the year, one student was already chiming in that they were not going to be by-standers, suggesting that students had begun to take up the language and concepts Ms. Smith had emphasized in previous discussions.

Ms. Smith, who was always reflecting on how to bring the message and need for activism to very young people [Ms. Smith, Interview 2 Transcript, December 2017], gently reminded her students that in addition to "personally doing something about it," it was sometimes necessary to get help from an adult—and that asking for help also counted as taking action. This point may in part reflect Ms. Smith's attempt to disrupt the students' notion of telling on someone as a bad thing. Throughout the year, I observed many informal conversations between Ms. Smith and the students regarding how to problem-pose and problem-solve, and what I learned was that Ms. Smith listened carefully to all of her students' concerns without ever silencing their voices. She often returned the problems back to them to work through, reminding them that she had faith in their ability to figure out a fair solution.

I observed similar invitations for political engagement and talk in Ms. Martinez and Ms. Barker's classrooms. Ms. Barker framed her invitation by describing the need for kindness as social action that can make the world better. Ms. Barker reminded students of

national and global "tragedies" throughout the year, and she continuously drew on the broad theme of the classroom, *choose kindness*, as a mantra for social action. Ms. Martinez positioned her students as peacemakers and global citizens from the start. She invited political talk from her students as they learned through literature from such political leaders as Gandhi, Wangari Maathai, and Tomás Rivera. Each teacher established that school was a place to talk politics in order to address things that were not fair in their world and the world at large—and, more importantly, to learn to work toward solutions together as a community.

In Chapter Five, I presented each teacher's yearlong units of study. I was surprised to learn that although Ms. Martinez, Ms. Smith, and Ms. Barker each taught in a different school and district, the focus of their units overlapped significantly. For example, each teacher foregrounded contemporary concerns regarding immigration, gender equality, race and racism, religion, war, and poverty. As the teachers taught their units of study and read aloud a broad range of multicultural children's literature, the students learned about how these concerns intersect in people's lives. Over time, the students demonstrated an increasing ability to extend their talk towards criticality by not only naming a single form of oppression (e.g., discrimination based on a person's race), but also naming the multiple intersecting forms of oppression that might affect a single person's life (e.g., race, class, and gender).

For example, Ms. Barker spoke up against a current dominant narrative of Muslims as terrorists over and over again during the year. She started this conversation during the first week of school in late August, when she read Jeanette Winter's *Librarian of Basra* (2005), and continued it more explicitly when she read Jeanette Winter's *September Roses* (2004) on September 11 to pay tribute to the thousands of people who lost their lives on that day in 2001. On that day, Ms. Barker presented two important

points to her students. First, she established that the 2001 attack "wasn't an accident. Somebody actually did this on purpose… they're a group called Al Qaeda, and they are considered to be an extremist Muslim group of people" [Ms. Barker, Transcript of Read Aloud, September 11, 2017]. Second, without naming the Trump administration's attempts to ban Muslims from entering the United States, Ms. Barker explained,

> And there are extremists in all religions. There are extremists in Christianity. There are people that take the religion too far and do mean and hateful things. And so I know that a lot of times—sometimes people get scared and they think, well, you know, "Should I be worried about people that are Muslim? Should I be worried about people that are Christian?" And you shouldn't be because the people that do these violent acts of terror are people that take the religion and then turn it around to something that it doesn't really mean. Does that make sense? [Ms. Barker, Transcript of Read Aloud, September 11, 2017]

The students did not say much in response to Ms. Barker; they listened, and a few replied, "Kind of" and "Wow." Some of the students asked for further details about the planes crashing into the World Trade Center, and one student shared a story of a family member who was a firefighter and lost his life on September 11. However, at this point in the year, the students did not respond with any comments or questions about religion. It was likely that many of the students came from families that did not necessarily frame Muslims as terrorists; however, it is also possible that many of the students were surprised to learn that there were extremists in Christianity.

This conversation continued across the months, and in the spring (March 2018), during the *Signs and Symbol* unit, students did openly talk about Trump's decision to restrict US immigration from predominantly Muslim countries in response to reading and learning about Fred Korematsu's advocacy for Muslims' rights. Using her world map, Ms. Barker pointed out the six countries that were included in Trump's Muslim ban and explained that people from these countries were seeking refuge in the United States

because of wars in their home countries. Through Korematsu's narrative, Ms. Barker linked the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II to the current Muslim ban, presenting both as political events that were both fueled by the American government's rhetoric of intolerance towards those two communities.

Some of Ms. Barker's students tried to make sense of Trump's action as a sincere effort to protect America from danger. For example, Student Z expressed, "I think Donald Trump is blocking people who are coming from wars. I think he just doesn't want the war to come to us" [Transcript of Read Aloud, March 1, 2018]. Ms. Barker held firm on her stance that Trump's policies were harmful and based on prejudice against large communities of people. Ms. Barker responded,

> Maybe...(pause). Yesterday, when we read—they talked about war hysteria—where people were really frightened of people that were different than them. And there is a little bit of that going on as well. He [Trump] basically has a prejudice against an entire religion because of the acts of a small group people. So, he [Trump] thinks that people of the Muslim religion might be terrorists because of the acts of certain people. But then when you think about it—you know? When you think about other events that have happened in our world—even the United States—is it only people of the Muslim religion that hurt people and commit those crimes? So, he's [Trump's] just kind of putting those people in one big group and has a prejudice against them. [Transcript of Read Aloud, March 1, 2018]

A few students responded to Ms. Barker with a quiet, "No." This excerpt of talk from Ms. Barker was bold and political. She extended her own talk towards criticality as she continued to disrupt the single story (Adichie, 2009) of Muslims as terrorists by asking students to consider crimes and acts of violence in the world and the United States—and, as the teacher, she knew that the students would all be able to think of other acts of violence that had nothing to do with Muslims. Without naming any specific events, Ms. Barker reminded her students that even people who are not Muslim (and who may, in the students' minds, be considered undeniably American) are capable of terrorist acts.

Toward the end of this read aloud and literature discussion, Student J spoke up and continued to extend the class's talk towards critical considerations: "In legal terms it is called completing background checks on the people that are coming into the country. We need to fund background checks. They may be terrorists, or they may be innocent." Another student pushed back on Student J and said, "We probably do not have the time and money to research all the people. Yeah, and also they may not have it on their record—if they had done something." Student J did not back down, and he held fast to the idea that background checks were a necessity for the safety of America: "I want to respond to you, G. I think just because we do not really know who they are—what their background is." Ms. Barker then posed a question to Student J and the class: "Would you think if we here in America were going to travel to Iran[2]—Iran should do background checks on us before we go?" Student J responded with a firm, "Yes!" [Transcript of Read Aloud, March 1, 2018].

The students and Ms. Barker did not always agree with each other about Trump's policies. Although Ms. Barker might have preferred for her students to conclude that increased background checks were discriminatory, she was successful in opening up the conversation and convincing the students that this community was a safe place to grapple with political ideas, voice their thoughts openly, and consider how prejudice and power played out in government decisions. Through these conversations, Ms. Barker was striving to "change the underlying story" (Kumashiro, 2001, p. 6) that construes all Muslims as terrorists.

Ms. Martinez taught mostly students of Mexican heritage, many of whom were first-generation. Accordingly, she called attention to current concerns regarding

[2] Ms. Barker's students knew that Ms. Barker's mother was an immigrant from Iran. I knew from my conversations with Ms. Barker that she was personally affected by Trump's Muslim ban rhetoric.

immigration from Central America to the United States during many of her read aloud discussions. At the end of November, Ms. Martinez spent a week reading Duncan Tonatiuh's *Pancho Rabbit and The Coyote* (2013)—a story about a young rabbit named Pancho who sets out to find his father, who left his home in Mexico two years prior to work as a farm worker in America. By this point in the year, Ms. Martinez had taught many texts about border crossing, including Anzaldúa's *Friends from the Other Side/Amigos del otro lado* (1993), Mora's *Tomás and the Library Lady* (1997), and Buitrago's *Two White Rabbits* (2015), and the students were familiar what it meant for families like those featured in the stories to "travel north" [Transcript from video-recording, November 30, 2017] from Mexico, in both the geographic and political senses of that phrase. The students also understood that many of their own parents and family members had travelled north to the United States, though not necessarily in the same circumstances as the characters in the books. Based on their discussion, it was evident that the students were developing their critical sociocultural knowledge on the need to cross borders and the dangers that are associated with this crossing.

As the students read and discussed *Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote* (Tonatiuh, 2016), one of them shared with the class that Pancho's father had "to cross to the other side." Ms. Martinez asked the student what he meant, and he responded, "It is Texas." Ms. Martinez added, "It could be Texas. Texas is part of the—" and the students jumped in with, "United States!" As the discussion continued, Ms. Martinez and the students discussed why family members sometimes needed to travel to the North and be apart from their loved ones. The students repeatedly listed the following reasons: people need jobs, money, and safety.

An interesting moment in this conversation occurred after Ms. Martinez and the students had established Papa's reasons for traveling so far to provide for his family. Ms.

Martinez asked the students, “Work. Work. So if they [people who cross the border] are looking for work, even the character—the Papa. Can I say he's a lazy man? Is he a lazy man?” The students unanimously responded, “No!” In this moment, and others like it, Ms. Martinez was challenging the common stereotype of Mexicans as lazy. In our second interview, Ms. Martinez had told me that such stereotypes of Mexican-Americans as dirty, lazy, and illiterate had affected her own perceptions of herself detrimentally in her youth. According to Ms. Martinez, her feelings of internalized racism were perpetuated in the context of her K-12 education, and she was determined to foreground an appreciative and authentic narrative about her heritage and her people with her students. Later in this conversation, Ms. Martinez added to previous discussions about the logistics and dangers of crossing to the other side, another contemporary political issue:

> Ms. Martinez: Somebody told me this was fiction. Do you think in real life Mexicans jump on trains to come to The United States?
>
> Student A (White female): Noooooo...
>
> Students: Yes - yes [kids disagreeing with Student A]
>
> Ms. Martinez: Actually, they do.
>
> Student A: They don't jump on top of it - they jump in [the train].
>
> Ms. Martinez: Actually they do jump on trains, and guess what else they do?.. they jump on the train, but sometimes they get underneath the train and it's very, very dangerous, and it could kill them.
>
> Students: Yeah, yeah
>
> Ms. Martinez: They get in between the wheels and they hold on. They hold on. But they're going really fast, so if they let go, they're gonna die. Unfortunately, that happens. But yes.

In the video-recording, it was powerful to watch Student A, the only White student in the class, respond to Ms. Martinez’s narrative about Mexicans jumping “on” trains. She was

visibly distraught, and she pointed to the image in the book to show that she understood that people cross borders by train, but she thought of the inside of the train as the place where people must sit. Student A was confident that her teacher and peers must have been confused about where and how people travel by train; many of her peers agreed with Ms. Martinez and tried to correct Student A. It was powerful to observe Ms. Martinez name the reality of death—as a consequence of crossing the border for work, money, and safety—in the context of this conversation with first-grade students. During the read aloud events, Ms. Martinez sought to frame the narratives of immigrants (particularly those who were being turned away, detained, and criminalized at the US-Mexican border) as complex, necessary, heroic, and beautiful.

In conclusion, the teachers across these three classrooms initiated and welcomed political discourse from the onset of the academic year. The teachers recognized that school was a political institution, and as critical educators, their purpose was to support their students toward transformation into critical thinkers and activists, who would question the status quo and seek to make things better. These teachers encouraged their students to engage in critical readings which had the potential to challenge hegemonic narratives and open their minds to other possible accounts of why things are the way they are. Student H in Ms. Smith's classroom, towards the end of the Civil Rights unit in March, articulated her "unlearning" (Kumashiro, 2001, p. 8) on America as follows,

> Student H: I used to think America was the actual place to be. It is supposed to be nice, educational, full of great things, and safe. This is not an explanation of safe or security or feeling safe or really being nice. It is not freedom. It is just showing hatred. It is like another world.
>
> Ms. Smith: And in your life do you experience feeling safety and freedom?
>
> Student H: In a way.

> Ms. Smith: Do you think that some people even now don't necessarily feel that same freedom and safety?
>
> Student H nods her head. [Transcript of Read Aloud, March 2018]

Ms. Smith lowered her voice, leaned forward, and listened carefully to Student H's words. Based on Ms. Smith's response, she seemed to not only recognize, but also relate to the vulnerability and maybe even sadness that Student H was expressing. Ms. Smith nudged Student H to keep thinking by leaving her with a question; similarly, in each read aloud discussion, Ms. Barker and Ms. Martinez also ensured that their students would continue to think together the next day and for many days after that. This section, extending talk towards criticality, centered on the teachers' discourses to facilitate talk towards criticality. In the next section, I continue to focus on the classroom conversations, but I will report on how the teachers set up structures to encourage the students to take up critical perspectives in their conversations with each other.

TURNING DISCOURSE BACK TO THE STUDENTS

Across the year and classrooms, I observed that teachers implemented a variety of approaches within the interactive read aloud structure in order to turn the responsibility of the talk and/or response back to the students and thereby cultivate their critical sociocultural knowledge. In this section, I describe three approaches that I observed, framing them as substructures within the broad structure of read-aloud. These three approaches were: 1) small group collaboration, 2) individual reader responses (e.g., journal writing, visual art projects, etc.) and 3) "turn and talk." Turn and talk is an activity in which the teacher invites the students to work in pairs, literally turning to face each other and discuss a particular moment/word/question about the text being read to the group. These three teachers implemented turn and talk before, during, and after reading texts aloud. The purpose of these three substructures was to complement whole-group

discussions by prompting students to think (with each other or on their own) about the topics being presented. By using these approaches, the teachers enacted Freire's (1970/2000) principle that teachers and students should work together as co-learners and co-teachers. They also encouraged students' active participation, which is another important goal for critical pedagogies.

During small group collaboration and individual reader response, the teachers developed a different context for the students to engage with the literature. In these new contexts, the teachers distanced their own talk significantly from the students' talk. However, turn and talk took place during the whole group interactive read aloud, and I observed that the teachers primarily used this method when they noticed that students were reacting with surprise or unrest (i.e., when critical encounters occurred). Teachers also used turn and talk when they wanted students to think more about a specific event in the text. Unlike small group collaboration and independent reading response, where the teachers designed the activity from the onset and then stepped away to some extent, turn and talk was typically implemented when the teacher invited students to share their thinking about a text in the whole group setting. I also found that the teachers would sometimes use turn and talk to generate a critical encounter for their students. However, all three approaches were similar in that they turned discourse back to the students and thereby positioned them as active participants in the conversation

Small Group Collaborations

Ms. Barker, Ms. Martinez, and Ms. Smith invited students to engage in small group collaborations within the structure of interactive read aloud. They used this substructure at various times (e.g., before reading or after reading) within the read aloud, and, occasionally, they used it as the main structure for interactive read aloud (e.g., students read/discussed books together in small groups, rather than as a whole group). I

identified small group collaborations as any event when the teachers asked students to work together in groups of two or more. The primary purpose of this activity was to give students an opportunity to consider some aspect of a book or unit theme collaboratively, without direct oversight from the teacher.

Many different types of work occurred in small group collaborations (e.g., reading a new genre together, artistic response, and literature circle). For example, Ms. Smith often included graphic novels as part of her text sets, and instead of reading the graphic novel aloud to the students, she would ask the students to work in small groups and read a section of the text together. In the image here, during the *Discrimination* unit, Ms. Smith copied the graphic novel *Hidden* (Dauviller, Lizano, & Salsedo, 2014) in its entirety and divided it into six sections, and she divided the students into six small groups. Each group was asked to read and discuss their part of the book together, and then Ms. Smith supported each small group as they shared their part of the story with the whole class from their tables. Through this activity, Ms. Smith supported her students in engaging in reading and talk to explore a new genre within units designed to address sociocultural knowledge and issues of inequity.

Figure 6.1. Ms. Smith giving instructions on small group collaborations with *Hidden* (2014)

Figure 6.2. A small group in Ms. Smith's class works with *Hidden* (2014)

These three teachers valued the possibilities of students thinking together to make meaning as readers, writers, and (borrowing Ms. Smith's term) "upstanders."

Ms. Martinez engaged her students in a variety of artistic projects in response to literature throughout the year. The children often worked together in small groups to

complete these projects. In October 2017, Ms. Martinez and her class spent one week reading the 2017 Tomás Rivera award-winning picture book, *Maybe Something Beautiful: How Art Transformed a Neighborhood* (Campoy & Howell, 2016). This book is the true story of the illustrator, Rafael López, and his work on the Urban Art Trail Project. It is the story of how Mr. López collaborated with children and families in San Diego's East Village to paint large-scale murals together that transformed their neighborhood. Each day, after Ms. Martinez read a few pages and led a discussion about community, art, and activism, she turned the work over to the students. During this week, the students first worked to design their own ideas about murals they would like to paint in their neighborhoods Next, in small group collaborations, they created their own small group murals by selecting components from the designs they had each made earlier on their own (see images below). In other words, the students worked in groups to develop their individual ideas into a single mural. Ms. Martinez's role was to guide them with the story and create space for the students to paint, talk, and decide on their own murals.

Figure *6.3.* Students working on individual ideas for class mural (days 2 and 3).

On the fourth day of the unit, Ms. Martinez was also supporting three preservice teachers, and she invited them to join the student groups as they worked. (Some of the images below show them sitting at the tables.) However, she did not ask the preservice teachers to make the decisions for the students; rather, she encouraged them to observe and support the students in their collaboration as needed. This small group collaboration happened in stages across the week. On the fourth day, when it was time for the students to begin working in teams to make decisions about their mural, Ms. Martinez explained:

> Okay, now here's the problem and here's where it's going to get a little bit messy. I don't want people to get upset, but you're going to have to problem solve in teams. We are going to have four teams and the four teams are going to have to decide from all the pictures you drew… Listen guys, it is going to be hard work and by the way, it's something that will help you in your real life because when you work with a team, you don't always agree. And sometimes you have to make decisions and not everything can be included. So you have to decide how are you going to decide. It's called negotiating. How are you going to figure out?... How can we figure out how to best represent our class [in the mural]? All the art you did, it has to go on one piece of paper. Now when you think about it, that's what these artists

> had to do. He [López] couldn't put everything on the walls. We make a plan and then you will decide… calm down. Thank you. They had to decide, well what's going to go on the finished product? What's going to go on the mural? So we're not going to glue the papers together. I want you to look at the pictures and then try to figure out a big design for it. [Video-Recording and Transcript, October 13, 2017]

Ms. Martinez provided problem-posing and problem-solving opportunities for the students throughout this small group collaboration. Here, she attempted to prepare the students for feelings of disappointment because the final murals would not include all of the art they had created individually. Through this project, the students were learning to "negotiate" and make decisions about the art that would be most representative of their classroom community. Ms. Martinez centered the story in her instructions when she explained that the artists (i.e., López) in the community also had to negotiate with each other. The goal was for each of the four teams to make a mural; these four murals would then be combined to form a single mural. According to Ms. Martinez, doing this work in small groups was more manageable for the first-graders to navigate, instead of trying to make these decisions as a whole group. Finally, Ms. Martinez also presented this opportunity to negotiate as representative of the process that people engage in when they work together in "real life."

The following images illuminate the process from the students' decision-making on the fourth day through the completed small group murals. (Unfortunately, I never saw the completed mural due to scheduling issues.) This project was a form of real-life activism for the students in Ms. Martinez's class. The students displayed their work first in the main hallway of their school, and they shared their mural during a performance they gave to their school in honor of Tomás Rivera [Informal conversations with Ms. Martinez]. In the images below, students were working in small groups (i.e., teams) to

make decisions about what images from their art to include in the big mural and small group murals with support from Ms. Martinez and some preservice teachers (PTs).

Figure *6.4.* Ms. Martinez sharing process for negotiating and using *Maybe Something Beautiful* (2016) as a guide.

Figure *6.5.* Students working in teams to negotiate final murals.

Figure 6.6. Ms. Martinez and PT listening to students' ideas and admiring art.

Bringing images together in teams

Bringing images together in teams

Small group murals

Figure 6.7. Final stages of mural making in small group collaboration.

As the example of Ms. Martinez's class indicates, small group collaboration disrupted the traditional power hierarchy of interactive read aloud. It was also a shift in the physical organization of read aloud. Ms. Martinez and the students were still discussing and thinking about the book, *Maybe Something Beautiful* (2016), but now Ms. Martinez was traveling to her students, instead of students sitting on the floor facing Ms. Martinez as she read. The next example from Ms. Barker's classroom illustrates how she also disrupted traditional hierarchies by rearranging classroom space to change students' locations relative to the teacher. Small group collaboration was designed to decenter the

teacher's physical presence and voice, even as she remained present and engaged in her role as facilitator.

During small group collaborations, the students were reading, talking, and working through the text all at once, while the teachers made their way to the students to listen and support them. By inviting students to work through texts on their own during scheduled interactive read aloud time, the teachers challenged their own authority as interpreters and meaning-makers of the texts. During small group collaborations, the students decided what to grapple with and when to stop and further discuss what was on their minds. In the image below, Ms. Barker's students were working in small groups to read and discuss a recent article about Fred Korematsu published in *Newsela* as part of their unit on *Signs and Symbols* [March 2018]. Ms. Barker had read a series of picture books and articles to the students throughout this unit, but she also set aside days for the students to read aloud to each other and make their own decisions about when to pause and what to talk about. In the image below, Ms. Barker was listening carefully to the student groups; she was generally very selective about inserting her own talk during their discussions. Ms. Barker, as well as Ms. Smith and Ms. Martinez, took these opportunities to observe their students' thinking, knowing that the class would later come back together as a whole group.

Figure *6.8.* Ms. Barker listens to students reading aloud and discussing Korematsu article.

In addition to disrupting the traditional power hierarchy by shifting the read aloud from teacher-led to student-led, small group collaborations also gave students the opportunity to try out their own ways of building critical sociocultural knowledge.

As I have reported, Ms. Barker's students were used to working and talking together about their work on a daily basis across content areas, including during interactive read alouds. For example, after discussing *Ghost* (2016) together in October 2017, Ms. Barker and the students continued to build on their conversations about *Ghost* (2016) for the remainder of the year. For example, during her Civil Rights unit in January 2018, Ms. Barker instructed the students to work together and consider aspects of a painting, *The Problem We All Live With* (Rockwell, 1964). At the end of their read aloud on Ruby Bridges and whole group discussion of the painting, Ms. Barker asked,

> Imagine if you are a Black female… how do you make a life for yourself? To not be able to provide for your family even though you are working so hard. Make connections, observations, and wonderings—about the painting *(The Problem We All Live With)*–working on paper—work with Tribe or Partner. [Transcript Read Aloud, January 2018]

In this request, Ms. Barker asked them to think not only about Ruby Bridges' experience in the past, but about what it means to be a Black girl or woman in America, yesterday or today. Ms. Barker posed a question (*How do you make a life for yourself?*), and she challenged the students' common-sense (meritocracy) response of "work hard" by stating in her next turn that Black women do work hard, yet many still cannot provide for their families. She also reminded the students that they had all read about Ghost's mother, a Black woman who was struggling to make a living, even though she worked full-time. The students and Ms. Barker had only expressed feelings of admiration for Ghost's mother. Ms. Barker divided the students into small groups in order to reflect, wonder, and make connections drawing on Ruby Bridges' story and their knowledge of civil rights (past and present). They worked together for about 15 minutes, and Ms. Barker called them back to share their ideas with their peers.

> Student: My mom told me that job pay is not the same for different genders and races. It's not fair—<u>still</u> there is racism—and I think that it is unfair—
>
> Student: Racism is <u>still</u> happening.
>
> Ms. Barker: Something I find really powerful about the painting—Rockwell really painted this almost to inform people there was and <u>still</u> is racism in our world. He wanted to show a broader idea—how people can be oppressed and put down—and make a point about the Civil Rights…
>
> Student: Black people are <u>still</u> treated disrespectfully in America.
>
> Ms. Barker: People who have problems because of their race feel it everyday. That is racism. How does that make a person feel? Or a community feel? [Transcript and Video-Recording, January 2018]

Here, the students and Ms. Barker's use of the word *still* demonstrated that although the discussion that day had centered on Rockwell's painting of a historic event, and the students in their small group written responses focused on how Ruby Bridges may have felt at the time, when the class came back together, the students and Ms. Barker were

thinking about the conditions for Black Americans in the present. The students did not retell only what they worked on in terms of Ruby Bridges; rather, they shared collaborative reflections on Ms. Barker's original question about being a hard-working Black female and not being able to provide for your family. Based on this exchange, the students collectively agreed that Black Americans currently contend with racism. In other words, the students returned from their small group collaborations with the critical understanding that racism (in the forms of disrespect and unequal pay) remains a problem today, even though Ruby Bridges and other activists put their lives on the line to protest racial inequality during the Civil Rights Movement.

Independent Reader Response

Ms. Smith, Ms. Barker, and Ms. Martinez planned for students to independently respond to the read aloud and discussion multiple times a week. This was never a silent time; students and teachers were still engaging in dialogue with each other. The purpose of this substructure was to foreground students' own thinking in response to the book(s), discussions, and/or theme of the unit. Specifically, independent reading response offered another way for students to work through their new thinking and develop critical sociocultural knowledge. In other words, while the teachers informally assessed the students' responses in order to gauge their reading comprehension, the teachers also read and listened to these responses so they could gain insight into the students' sociocultural perspectives. For example, Ms. Barker learned through reading a student's response on civil rights that he was being picked on by his peers due to his religious identity. Ms. Barker was grateful that she had asked the children for a written response, because she felt certain that this student would not have said anything to her or to his peers directly. In this case, the student benefitted from multiple forms of reader response. This example

highlights the importance of creating both public and private spaces for students' responses, especially in discussions of sensitive sociocultural issues.

The independent reader response took a variety of forms within and across the three classrooms. Each teacher developed and provided instructions for their own approaches to the reader response. The students responded to the literature through visual art and writing. Sometimes the written response was for the purpose of self-reflection on sociocultural topics (e.g., a notebook entry), and sometimes it was oriented toward social action (e.g., writing a letter to request change).

Ms. Martinez often asked her students to draw and write for their independent reader response. Just as the students were welcome to speak in the language of their choice for their oral responses, they were welcome to write in any combination of languages for their reader response (Paris & Alim, 2014). The students expressed their thinking in both English and Spanish. It was important to Ms. Martinez that the students express themselves authentically. The images below are samples of a type of independent reading response the students worked on over a week as they read *Tomás and the Library Lady* (1997) in September 2017. In this independent response, Ms. Martinez encouraged the students to think about what it meant to be a "good citizen" like Tomás.

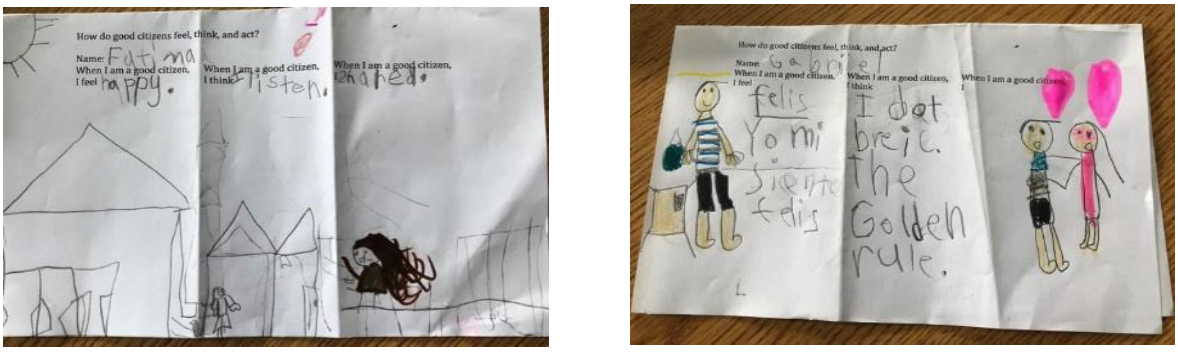


Figure 6.9. Students' sample reader responses from unit on *Tomás and the Library Lady* (Mora, 1997).

Ms. Martinez gave the following prompts: *When I am a good citizen, I feel…*, *When I am a good citizen, I think…*, and *When I am a good citizen, I….* The students responded to one section each day, and their responses drew from the literature discussion, particularly the idea of the importance of following *the golden rule*: to treat others as you wish to be treated. Although Ms. Martinez did not directly ask students to think about inequity in this reader response, the conversations that occurred this week served as an anchor lesson for many future lessons that addressed how people are treated in society (e.g., immigration) and how we, as good citizens, are all responsible for each other's well-being.

Similar to Ms. Martinez, who used these reader responses to invite students to think about who they are as citizens, Ms. Smith designed several reader response activities to teach the students that race is a social construct. During the unit, *Same and Different* Ms. Smith read a number of texts on skin color, including *The Colors of Us* (1999) by Karen Katz. In this unit and this read aloud, Ms. Smith sought to establish that everyone has a unique skin color, and she exclaimed throughout the two days of thinking about this text together, "We are all shades of BROWN." I was stunned at the boldness of this remark; I had never heard a teacher call the concept of being White into question so radically. Ms. Smith invited the students to draw self-portraits of themselves with crayons that were all different shades of brown.

Figure 6.10. Ms. Smith reading *The Colors of Us* (Katz, 1999); shades of brown; self-portraits.

In this lesson, Ms. Smith explained how skin color happens; she taught the students about melanin and the equator. Next, she asked them to create self-portraits in response to *The Colors of Us.* Katz (1999) does not say that we are all shades of brown, but Ms. Smith wanted to establish that as a *truth* between herself and her students. Again, this lesson served as an anchor for future lessons on race, power, discrimination, and the oppression experienced by people of color.

Through this artistic response, Ms. Smith invited all of her students to reimagine themselves as people of color, and the students' self-portraits underscored her message that "We are all shades of brown." Ms. Smith explained to me that this activity was an initial step toward understanding race as a social construct. By disrupting the ideas of skin color as literally black or literally white, Ms. Smith invited students to explore what "race" in our society really means, if it does not mean the actual color of one's skin. This anchor lesson served as the springboard for students to learn together that we all have beautiful, unique skin colors, but the social concept, construct, and response to race in America is political and painful and beyond the actual scope of skin color. Starting with this lesson, Ms. Smith's students learned that people can experience discrimination and

oppression because of their racial identity, or they can have power because of their racial identity.

Turn and Talk

Unlike the previous two substructures that occurred outside the discussions, one particular interactional structure emerged as primary as a substructure that all three teachers implemented within the whole group read aloud discussions: "Turn and Talk." All three teachers incorporated this practice from the very start of the year. In fact, each teacher provided some form of explicit instruction on how to choose and engage with a talking partner [Audio and Video-recordings, Field notes, Fall 2017]. Turn and talk thus became a predictable routine for the students; although the topics of discussion varied, they always knew that they were going to talk. These students' sense of ease conversing with each other would make me laugh to myself; we as a society often avoid bringing up politics in social settings because "it is not polite," but these young students talked politics and addressed social injustice head-on each day. When students experienced critical encounters during the reading aloud of the text, I observed that turn and talk was a key approach that teachers used to attend to their students' surprise in the moment. The teachers would notice and name the surprise that the students were expressing, and they would occasionally think out loud about what might be causing this encounter, but generally the teachers were eager to invite the students to talk through it with each other in this structure.

In *turn and talk*, teachers asked students to talk to each other in pairs about an issue or question during a whole group lesson. In these three classrooms, the primary purpose of turn and talk was not to assess students' reading comprehension in relation to standardized benchmarks. Rather, the turn and talk was almost always connected back to further discussion of sociocultural topics. The students across the three classrooms

engaged with a broad range of issues, including racism, healthcare, real estate, sexism, wages, access to resources, and religious freedom. During turn and talk, students positioned themselves as change-makers, resisting repetition and engaging in crisis (Kumashiro, 2001; 2009).

I documented and analyzed over 150 turn and talk events across the three classrooms. On average, each teacher asked students to turn and talk between two to three times during each interactive read aloud. However, on the days when students were working mostly in small group collaborations, there were no additional invitations from the teachers to turn and talk; this structure was unnecessary since the small group collaboration already required students to interact with each other. Turn and talk was a very short event that typically lasted between 30 seconds and 3 minutes. Unlike small group collaborations and independent reader response, this substructure gave the students just enough time and space to check in with each other. Deeper, longer conversations happened with the whole group or in the other two substructures described above.

Ms. Martinez, Ms. Smith, and Ms. Barker all identified turn and talk as an act of improvisation (Brown, 2013). They reported [Interview 2] that most often they did not know when they were going to ask the students to turn and talk; rather, they followed the students' cues (e.g., gasps, talking back to the text, jumping up on their knees, and looks of confusion). Ms. Barker explained,

> And so I think that's probably the most powerful thing about it [turn and talk] is that they're [students] getting to hear other people's perspectives and kind of develop their own thinking about what's going on in the text… You know, so those types of things will come up where I'm like, this is a good question to ask them so that they can kind of connect with the character or whatever's going on. So, sometimes I'll pose a question, but sometimes it's just, you know, based on their reaction… So, I want them to be able to see things from other people's perspectives and put themselves in other people's situations like that. Developing

> empathy almost. That's what I want. Yeah, I think that's my biggest thing. [Ms. Barker, Interview 2 Transcript, January 2018]

Ms. Smith and Ms. Martinez also affirmed the importance of students learning to listen to each other and described this as a key reason for their daily use of turn and talk. As discussed in Chapter Four, the teachers hoped that with time, students would cultivate empathy not just for each other, but also for people beyond the classroom. Turn and talk, as Ms. Barker expressed, was one way she thought the students could engage authentically with different situations, both locally and globally.

As an act of improvisation (Brown, 2013), teachers invited students to turn and talk when they wanted each student to notice and discuss an event or character in the book being shared. In other words, it sometimes seemed that the teachers were almost inciting a critical encounter by having the students turn and talk, because they knew as critical educators that something important was happening. However, as Ms. Barker mentioned, the teachers also paid close attention to students' reactions, particularly critical encounters (DeNicolo & Franquiz, 2006). For example, Ms. Martinez's first-graders often asked, "Why do families leave their homes?" From children's literature about immigration, they learned that families sometimes move out of necessity and sometimes by choice.

My analysis revealed that in order to respond to the students' critical encounters (or initiate new critical encounters), the teachers typically organized turn and talk using a three-part structure: *we listen; we challenge; and we continue.* In the first part, teachers explained when and how to listen by calling attention to moments of criticality and inviting students to talk about them. In the second part, *we challenge*, students and teachers talked back to each other and the text. Turn and talk provided an intentional space to talk and potentially challenge ideas. In the third part, *we continue*, the teachers

brought the whole group back together to share what they had talked about in pairs. After the students shared their ideas, the class continued reading and thinking together.

Two examples from Ms. Smith's classroom illustrate how the teachers' invitations to turn and talk could generate a new critical encounter (DeNicolo & Frnquiz, 2006) or respond to a critical encounter that was already occurring. The first example is from Ms. Smith's unit on multiple perspectives on Christopher Columbus. This event took place during Ms. Smith's read aloud of Adler's (1991) *A Picture Book of Christopher Columbus* on October 4, and Columbus Day was the following Monday, October 9. At the time, in the city where her school is located, there was a local debate about what this national holiday should be formally named at the local level: Columbus Day or Indigenous People's Day. Ms. Smith and the kids had engaged in this conversation for a few days by this point, and the students knew that at the end of the unit, they would write opinion pieces (independent student responses) reporting their preference for the name of the holiday and their rationale. Ms. Smith used Adler's (1991) text to introduce the celebratory dominant narrative of Columbus as the person who discovered America (the narrative that was likely most familiar to the students), and her purpose in this unit was to suggest that much of the students' existing knowledge on Columbus was "(mis)knowledge" (Kumashiro, 2001). About 15 minutes into the read aloud, Ms. Smith stopped and said,

> I want you to think about what he [Christopher Columbus] did when he landed on that island—put a flag—claimed it for Spain and now it was for Spain since he was there—he called the Native People who lived there Indians because he thought he was in India—and he gave them gifts… I want you to think what about—what does that make you think about? How would you feel if you were one of the Native peoples that saw this happening on your island? Turn and Talk with your partner [Video-Recording, Transcript, October, 2017]

Ms. Smith intentionally stopped reading aloud to give the students a few minutes to consider the text and situation with their peers. At this point, the students were listening to the book calmly (see image below); this was the familiar narrative about Columbus in the United States (Kumashiro, 2001).

Figure *6.11*. Ms. Smith and class: interactive read aloud of Adler's *A Picture Book of Christopher Columbus* (1991).

In her invitation to turn and talk, Ms. Smith summarized what had happened in the book, then asked the students to look at the situation from a different perspective—the perspective of the Indigenous people. As Kumashiro (2001) explains, "The importance of inclusion, then, lies not merely in its broadening of perspectives, but also in its ability to change the underlying story of the curricular unit and its political effect" (p. 6). The book's author, Adler (1991), was not foregrounding Indigenous perspectives; rather, his text positions Columbus as a hero. Ms. Smith challenged this narrative by asking the students to begin to disrupt their existing knowledge of Columbus, and more broadly, to disrupt the normalization of colonization in our society. Ms. Smith sought to "change the underlying story" of the well-known hero Columbus. After a few minutes, Ms. Smith invited the students to turn back, and their conversation continued:

Ms. Smith: Turn Back, Turn Back. Whoa!… You guys had a lot to talk about that with that. Thinking about someone landing on the island you have lived your whole life and putting a flag on it, and claiming it for another country and calling it their own… Claiming a country as your own and giving you gifts—is that enough? What were you and your partners talking about?

Students: NO!

Ms. Smith: What were you talking about?

Student L: We were talking about if those people come to my island—I would probably attack them—

Ms. Smith: You would feel like you need to defend yourself and your island.

Student L: I would say that these people are not allowed on our island. And if they give me gifts, I would actually not keep them. I would throw their gifts in the water. I would probably smash them.

Ms.Smith: I am wondering if the Indigenous people—if some of them did that

Student E: It is like taking all of their world from them.

Ms. Smith: Oooh! How do you think they felt?

Student E: They felt nothing.

Student F: [Speaking as the Indigenous People] Why are you giving us gifts? This is weird. What are you guys doing? We already have a name for our home and ourselves.

Ms. Smith: Check your bodies—make sure you are listening. What you are doing is you are putting yourself in the position of the Indigenous people—you are feeling empathy.

Based on the students' reactions, it is evident that Ms. Smith's prompt to consider Columbus's actions from the perspective of the Indigenous people had a strong effect on them. The students in this instance seemed to need Ms. Smith's nudge in order to begin thinking differently about what Columbus was doing to the Native people. When asked to turn back, many students raised their hands to share (see image below), and several articulated the injustice of Columbus's actions. Ms. Smith was connecting and extending

their ideas for them with her talk. It seems that for some students (for example, Student L and Student F), the turn and talk generated a critical encounter. Both of these students voiced their anger towards Columbus from the perspective of the Native people. Student L was not only expressing words of anger ("smash"), but her voice was shaking, she was up on her knees as she responded, and she wanted to keep talking. Student F took up the voice of the Native people in her talk and offered questions that she thought they must have been wondering about as their land was being invaded. In response, Ms. Smith noticed and named their thinking and feelings as empathy.

I identified this moment, and many others like this one, as problem-posing/problem-solving (Freire, 1970/2000) moments. The students' responses showed that many of them were beginning to develop a critical and humanizing approach to the Columbus story in this moment. Specifically, they shifted from regarding Columbus as the hero who discovered America to seeing him as an intruder who claimed land that did not belong to him through lies and trickery. In other words, some of the students' sociocultural knowledge on Columbus was transforming into *critical* sociocultural knowledge on Columbus.

Figure 6.12. Students' share their responses to Ms. Smith's guiding question.

Later in the year (February, 2018), when Ms. Smith read *Grandmama's Pride* (2005) by Becky Birtha during the spring semester, the students all gasped and started to call out at the moment when the young Black female protagonist of the story has learned to read and is going to town, where she will read the "Whites Only" signs for the first time. I have included the transcription and four corresponding screen shots to highlight the students' verbal and physical reactions in this moment. Unlike the turn and talk example presented above, where Ms. Smith sought to generate a critical encounter for the students through a guiding question, this example shows the students experiencing the critical encounter as a direct result of their transaction with the book. It also indicates the students' growing critical sociocultural knowledge.

By February, when this conversation occurred, Ms. Smith's students had been studying the Black Civil Rights Movement for over a month. Thus, they were already immersed in narratives of past and present injustices committed against Black communities all across America. By February, these students had clearly developed their critical perspectives enough to know that the heroine of the story was about to have her own first encounter with the racism of the South—the racism from which her mother and

grandmother had worked so hard to protect her. The event was approximately five minutes in length; therefore, the students and the teachers' turn and talk interaction was short and intense.

> 1. Ms. Smith reading: The next time we walked the ten blocks downtown in the hot August sun, I could read the names of all the streets we passed.
>
> Students: gasps all around the room

Figure 6.13. Ms. Smith reading *Grandmama's Pride* (Birtha, 2005).

The students were facing Ms. Smith. As she read this passage, as the image indicates, the students started to get up on their knees, and a few of them put their hands to their mouths as they gasped. Unlike the moment with Adler's text, every student is facing Ms. Smith and the book.

2. Ms. Smith: Mmmm-hmmm. Are you already thinking how this is going to change things, isn't it? (Ms. Smith continues reading)

Student: It is going to be bad because when she – when she –

Figure 6.14. Ms. Smith reading *Grandmama's Pride* (Birtha, 2005).

Ms. Smith acknowledged the students' gasps and identified that she, like them, knows that something in the story is about to change. A student started to speak back, but Ms. Smith decided to continue reading.

3. Ms. Smith: I want you to think about what might happen when she sees those signs that say, “Whites only” or “Coloreds only”?

Students raising their hands and calling out, “She might…”

Figure 6.15. Ms. Smith reading *Grandmama’s Pride* (Birtha, 2005).

After reading, Ms. Smith offered the students a guiding question to consider. She also closed the book because she knew that the students had a lot to say in response to this moment in the text. This appeared to be a critical encounter for most of the students in the classroom. The children were visibly upset. They were calling out, and more of them were sitting with their hands to their mouths in surprise. Ms. Smith was ready to listen, but then she decided to have them turn and talk with each other.

4. Ms. Smith: Turn and talk. Tell someone what you think is going to happen. How is she going to react?

Students: Talking erupts with fists in the air and sitting on knees.

Ms. Smith has closed the book and is sitting and listening to the talk. [Transcript of video-recording, February 2018]

Figure 6.16. Ms. Smith reading *Grandmama's Pride* (Birtha, 2005).

Student E's fist in the air and look of outrage in response to the injustice happening in the text is the perfect visual representation of this moment in Ms. Smith's classroom. Because the students were working through a critical encounter that was student-generated in response to the text, Ms. Smith sat back in her chair and just listened to the talk taking place around her. She did not walk around the room, engage in any of the conversations, or ask any additional questions. The students were talking back, and Ms. Smith knew that after the many months immersed in developing critical sociocultural knowledge, the students were more than capable of navigating this crisis (Kumashiro, 2001; 2009) on their own.

During this exchange, the students were not passive recipients of the story. Based on their reactions, they felt the injustice of the story deeply and desired to express their feelings to one another. This was an improvised moment for Ms. Smith. She may have imagined or even hoped that the students would be in tune with the climax of this text—and the implications for this character learning for the first time that she and her family are not treated equally due to race in society. Like the other two teachers in my study, Ms. Smith expected uncertainty (Kumashiro, 2001) during these discussions, and she hoped to make the students comfortable with feeling uncertain by repeatedly turning the conversations back to them. I argue that at moments like this one—when such young children share their thinking on critical sociocultural issues while both their peers and teachers listen—they learn that their voices matter.

CONCLUSION

In Chapter Six, I have focused on the teachers' strategies and approaches for facilitating critical conversations during the interactive read aloud. My analysis revealed that the teachers were intentional in their decisions to extend the talk of the group towards criticality. The teachers took it upon themselves to set the stage each day, in part by identifying a purpose or question to guide the day's discussion during their book introductions. During this opening, the teacher welcomed the students' perspectives, more often as the year went on, but this was a space they each designated as an opportunity to name the sociocultural consideration for that day's discussion. Furthermore, as a result of the findings I identified in Chapter Five, as well as the use of daily book introductions, the teachers welcomed students to engage with these texts and each other politically; thus, the teachers modeled political discourse and encouraged the students to take it up for themselves.

These three teachers valued and expected students' active contributions to the conversation throughout the interactive read aloud event. I was surprised to learn through my observations and analysis that these three teachers had built in a variety of substructures within the main event of read aloud to engage students in critical talk and thinking. In my review of the literature on interactive read alouds, I did not come across studies that reported on teachers' reorganizing and revising the whole group structure in order to facilitate student talk. Two of these substructures, small group collaborations and independent reading response, decentered the teacher as the facilitator of the discussion and thereby created contexts for students to facilitate and support each other through talk. In addition, the teachers, as part of their own praxis, were committed to actively listening and learning with and from their students; this is part of why they frequently turned discourse back to the students.

In Chapter Five, I presented the teachers' units of study across the entire academic year, including the lists of texts and text sets that were shared as the primary teaching tool for each unit. At the conclusion of this chapter, as I reflect on the multiple conversations that I was welcomed to witness, I recognize that, through their vision, planning, curating of resources, and talk, these teachers not only challenged the single story (Adichie, 2009) of any one of the unit topics (e.g., Civil Rights as a need of the past), but also challenged the notion that these narratives are independent of each other. In other words, the teachers did the work to link these units of study into a complex, overarching narrative that comprised multiple perspectives and experiences of resistance in both local and global contexts. Early in the year, the daily discussions began to have an unfinished feel to them, and the established routine of the interactive read aloud made it safe and acceptable for the community of learners to leave things unsaid, unfinished, and incomplete with the understanding that there would be more to talk about the next day. As Ms. Smith, Ms. Barker, and Ms. Martinez all reiterated in their own way, these critical and political conversations could potentially continue throughout the students' lifetimes.

Chapter 7: Discussion and Implications

My study examined literacy teachers' enactment of critical pedagogies during their interactive read aloud with multicultural literature over one academic year in the elementary classroom. My research questions were:

1. How do elementary teachers sustain and grow their enactment of critical pedagogies?
2. During whole-group discussions of multicultural children's literature, how do teachers address critical sociocultural knowledge and issues of inequity?
3. How do teachers who practice critical pedagogies navigate the critical encounters that arise when they discuss multicultural children's literature?

The three teacher participants in this study, Ms. Smith, Ms. Martinez, and Ms. Barker, all believed that their work as critical educators was to guide their students towards developing their own critical consciousness in order to challenge the status quo (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Analysis of these three participants and their practices revealed much about what it means to enact critical pedagogies in the elementary classroom in the context of literacy instruction. In this chapter, I discuss the significance of the key findings presented in Chapters Four, Five, and Six. I follow this by exploring implications for practice in both school and teacher education programs (preservice and inservice), implications for scholarship and theory, and directions for further study.

In my review of literature on inservice teachers' use of multicultural children's literature, I found that most studies in this area focus on inservice teachers learning about a type of critical pedagogy (e.g., culturally relevant pedagogy) in a teacher education context, typically as they were earning a Master's degree. In these studies, teacher educators/professors used multicultural children's literature as a resource to support inservice teachers' learning (e.g, Lewis & Ketter, 2008). The few studies that inquired

into inservice teachers' enactment of critical pedagogies in the classroom context often concluded that teachers found it challenging to enact these pedagogies in school due to the demands of the institution and the lack of support from the institution (e.g., Alford & Jetnikoff, 2016). Thus, the teachers in these studies, who positioned themselves as critical, often unknowingly enacted their pedagogy at a surface level (e.g., Harris Russell et al., 2016), "dulling its critical edge or omitting it altogether" (Ladson-Billings, 2014, p. 77). Furthermore, these studies did not report on the teachers' practice over an extended period of time; instead, they often focused on a single unit of study (e.g., Seely Flint & Tropp Laman, 2012) or even a single conversation (Moje & Lewis, 2007), typically within the context of one classroom.

This literature review revealed that further research was needed to understand how critical educators in the field of literacy instruction enact critical pedagogies using multicultural children's literature during interactive read aloud over an extended period of time. In addition, many of the studies I reviewed focused on teachers' first experiences of learning about critical pedagogies; there was limited research on how teachers sustain and grow their enactment of critical pedagogies over the course of their careers. I designed this study to address these gaps in research. I set out to advance the conversation by focusing on the strategies that critical educators use to support their students toward taking up critical stances during literacy instruction focused on multicultural children's literature. My study contributes to the field of literacy instruction in two related areas: 1) illuminating teachers' ways of sustaining and growing their own enactment of critical pedagogies and 2) demonstrating the ways teachers enact critical pedagogies inside literature discussions, including the ways they prompt, support, and extend students' critical responses to the literature and to the world.

TEACHERS' WAYS OF SUSTAINING AND GROWING THEIR PRACTICE AS CRITICAL EDUCATORS

In the current scholarship on teachers' learning of critical pedagogies, little research examines how teachers continue the growth of their humanizing critical sociocultural knowledge (Brown, 2013) after they have been introduced to critical theory and pedagogies as practitioners. The literature suggests that teachers are unlikely to be supported in this pursuit of critical sociocultural perspectives in the context of school (e.g., Alford & Jetnikoff, 2016). By seeking out opportunities for growth, the teacher participants in this project embraced Freire's (1970/2000) notion of *becoming* critical educators. Freire challenges critical educators to recognize that, like our students, we are "unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality… The unfinished character of reality necessitates that education be an ongoing activity" (p. 84). Ms. Barker, Ms. Martinez, and Ms. Smith exemplified this notion of *becoming* by developing their own critical sociocultural knowledge through consistent self-education in both in- and out-of-school contexts.

In order to sustain and grow their enactment of critical pedagogies, Ms. Smith, Ms. Barker, and Ms. Martinez were committed to deepening their own critical sociocultural knowledge. As critical educators, they continually inquired into and engaged with the sociocultural realities taking place around them both in and out of school. They were determined to continue questioning the hegemonic narratives that surrounded them, and this continuous questioning supported them in sustaining and growing their enactment of critical pedagogies over time. Ms. Martinez, Ms. Barker, and Ms. Smith developed a curriculum that centered on sustaining and growing their own critical sociocultural knowledge—a curriculum I referred to as an "all-encompassing" (Brown, 2013) curriculum to emphasize that the teachers were continuously working on

sustaining and growing their critical sociocultural knowledge in both in-and out-of school contexts. I also used the term "all-encompassing" to emphasize the teachers' awareness that sociocultural knowledge was always impacting how things worked in all contexts, specifically in the oppression and marginalization of people from diverse backgrounds

I developed a model (see Figure 7.1) to present my findings and illustrate the relationships between them. As I explained previously, based on my analysis and preliminary findings, I reorganized my research questions in order to respond to the relationship between the teachers' own learning and teachers' teaching as critical pedagogues. As Freire (1970/2000) explained, the pedagogy of the oppressed requires the teacher to simultaneously be both student and teacher; all three of these teachers had found their own ways to be both for the sake of their commitment to critical pedagogies. The teachers were also learning about and enacting critical pedagogies across multiple contexts in their lives, and their learning directly supported the students' attainment of critical sociocultural knowledge. The model identifies connections between the teachers' critical sociocultural knowledge and the teachers' pedagogical decisions and enactments. I understand the relationships between all of these areas in the teachers' lives to be reciprocal, intersectional, and overlapping.

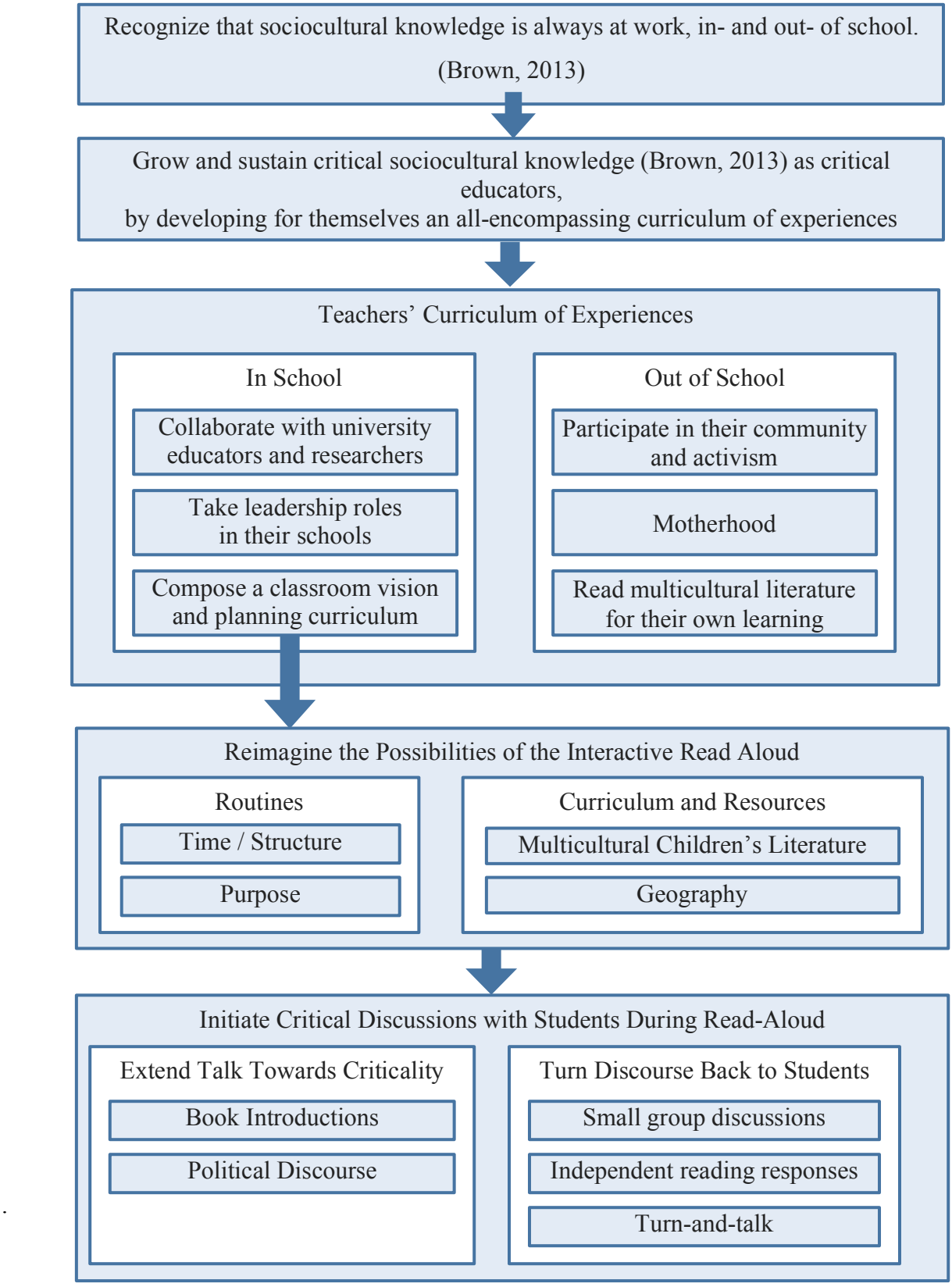


Figure 7.1. How three teachers enact critical pedagogies during interactive read aloud with multicultural children's literature.

TEACHERS' ENACTMENT OF CRITICAL PEDAGOGIES

In response to research questions two and three, my analysis revealed that all three teachers resisted what Banks (1993; 1994) calls "the additive approach," in which teachers add multicultural content, concepts, themes, and perspectives to a traditional curriculum without changing the structure of the curriculum itself. Instead, these teachers each designed a yearlong curriculum comprising structures and routines that met Banks's (1993; 1994; 2014) criteria for the "transformation approach" and often seemed to be moving towards the "social action approach." Ms. Smith, Ms. Martinez, and Ms. Barker were committed to working for change in the context of school, and they enacted this commitment in part by continuously integrating sociocultural topics into their instruction. I found that the teachers' enactment of critical pedagogies included the following yearlong commitments: implementing structures that welcomed community and dialogue, planning curricula grounded in sociocultural topics, and drawing on global and political discourses that offered new perspectives to students. Through all of these strategies, the teachers sought to "change the underlying story" (Kumashiro, 2001) of oppression and inequity. In doing so, they made it possible for students to develop their critical sociocultural knowledge.

In Chapters Five and Six, I reported that the teachers reimagined the possibilities of interactive read aloud and turned the discourse back to their students throughout the read aloud event. Through a variety of reading workshop structures (e.g., whole group read aloud, literature discussions, small group collaborations, and independent reading), these teachers challenged dominant narratives and foregrounded the voices of the "Other" (Kumashiro, 2001), both past and present, through multicultural literature. The teachers in this study, all of whom had over ten years of classroom service, identified as workshop (Allington, 2000; Routman, 1991) teachers. As they developed into critical educators

over the years, they each found ways to adapt the traditional literacy workshop structure to teach for critical education. They reimagined the possibilities of interactive read aloud and reading workshop for the purpose of anti-oppressive education (Kumashiro, 2001, 2009) and other critical pedagogies by incorporating a variety of learning contexts within the workshop structure. These contexts decentered the teacher and welcomed student collaboration and student independence, thereby empowering students to voice their own critical perspectives. Furthermore, the predictable daily routine of the interactive read aloud fostered a sense of safety that enabled the students and the teachers to grow into a community of learners who were willing to share their ideas in response to the readings.

As they worked on developing themselves as critical educators, the teachers simultaneously designed a reading workshop curriculum for their students that were organized into units of study focused on critical education issues (e.g., immigration, civil rights, and global perspectives). Ms. Smith, Ms. Martinez, and Ms. Barker planned these units of study carefully. The teachers maintained these practices throughout the school year, and I observed that they had a positive effect on the students' willingness to embrace political content and extend their own talk towards criticality.

As critical educators, these teachers aimed to disrupt the "hidden curriculum" (Apple, 1990/2004) of school as they foregrounded the voices and narratives of the "Other" and called attention to the connections between historical and contemporary events. Research (e.g., Botelho, Young, & Nappi, 2014; Kohl, 1994) has indicated that curriculum and teaching around critical issues often stays focused on historical events and situations, rather than emphasizing oppression as a present-day reality. Notably, these teachers integrated the contemporary with the historical, engaging in political talk and conversations about present-day issues. In some cases, the students themselves were initially unaware of these issues, possibly due to their own positionalities (e.g., race, age,

class). Their use of multicultural literature written by authors of color brought the voices of the "Other" into their daily interactive read-alouds. Yet, as I described in Chapter Five with Ms. Barker's experience in reading aloud *Ghost* (2016), this was challenging work for the teachers due in part by the students' resistance to the narratives presented in the literature; and therefore, I concluded that the literature alone could not bring about transformation. In their vision statements, the teachers each articulated a hope for their students to see themselves as members of a global community; accordingly, they brought the world to their students by explicitly teaching them about local, national, and global geography. Through this instruction, the teachers supported students' engagement with narratives of heroes, activists, cultures, and political events on local and global scales. They integrated the insights of multicultural literature with the rest of their literacy curriculum by incorporating read alouds as a daily practice and by linking literature discussions to learning in other areas, like geography, so that students could experience reading the word to read the world (Freire, 1970/2000).

Interestingly, although these teachers each worked in different schools and different districts, they shared similar ideas about the topics of study for their units. For example, interactive read aloud discussions that focused on immigration, civil rights, and activism occurred across all three classrooms. The participants' approaches to classroom teaching and curriculum design upheld a key principle of critical pedagogy: "It means centering our work on democratic principles and critical concepts, using them as the main framework for deciding what goes in and what stays out of the environments we create in our classrooms" (Bomer & Bomer, 2001, p. 15). Ms. Martinez, Ms. Barker, and Ms. Smith were intentional in their own development as critical educators, and accordingly, they were intentional in teaching their students to be kind, empathetic, global citizens, peace educators, and up-standers.

My third research question inquired into the teachers' navigations of critical encounters. Kumashiro (2001) argues

> Furthermore to bring about change in oneself as well as in society can be very labor intensive, and may need to be a process that happens year-round and not only in isolated and rare moments. Change (of the student and society) cannot happen in predictable and controllable lessons: Students are never exactly who we think they are, they never come from exactly where we think they do, and they never respond exactly as expected. Anti-oppressive education is not an easy, rational, straightforward process, and pretending otherwise can actually contribute to additional forms of oppression. Therefore, an anti-oppressive education that expects crisis for both students and teacher may need to create space in the curricula where students can enter and work through crisis in ways unforeseeable by the teacher. (p. 8)

Ultimately, Ms. Barker, Ms. Martinez, and Ms. Smith seemed to inherently understand this argument regarding the difficult and often unpredictable realities of an anti-oppressive education approach. The teachers welcomed the labor-intensive nature of this work both for themselves and for their students. They also generated moments of crisis (also known as critical encounters) for themselves and for their students. In Chapters Four, Five, and Six, I identified several examples of such crises experienced by the teachers and the students; my analysis of these moments aimed to demonstrate the work the teachers and students did to work through the crisis. In the context of the interactive read aloud, the working-through occurred during interactions between teacher and students, as well as students and their peers. According to Kumashiro (2001, 2009), it is the process of working through crisis that enables transformation toward what Brown (2013) calls humanizing critical sociocultural knowledge. My findings lend support to Kumashiro's argument; change requires time, commitment, and willingness to work through crisis. This is what I learned from Ms. Smith, Ms. Martinez, and Ms. Barker.

The teachers provided daily opportunities and predictable open structures for conversations centered on sociocultural topics, and these repeated opportunities meant

that conversations could continue over days, weeks, and months. Within the contexts of critical pedagogies, this kind of continued and connected opportunity was important in that it gave teachers opportunities both to respond in the moment, and also to reflect and recalibrate before the next day's discussion. This was particularly important in Ms. Barker's case given her own (dis)comfort level and her own investment in learning about critical pedagogy in the company of her students (e.g., reading aloud *Ghost* [2016]).

The structure of day-to-day continued conversation also provided opportunities for teachers to sustain and deepen critical conversations with their students over time. These perspectives and lived experiences are not overturned or disrupted in a single conversation. For example, if the teachers in this project had only called attention to issues of inequity during a single lesson (or even a single unit), the experience of discussing intersectional forms of inequity (based on race, class, gender, and more) would have never been normalized for these young students. Through my extended time in each classroom, I recognized that it takes multiple, and in these cases, daily critical conversations in order for students to gain access to multiple perspectives/books/authors. Kumashiro (2001, 2009) speaks to the dangers of repetition of dominant narratives such that they become society's common sense; we can infer that in response to this repetition, critical educators need to facilitate repeated opportunities to consider diverse perspectives that have the potential to disrupt and ultimately dismantle the power structures enforced by the dominant social group. Through this ongoing structure, intentional decisions to focus on political discourse, and the creation of multiple opportunities for students to actively voice their perspectives, these three teachers prepared their students to become *upstanders*.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE: SCHOOL AND TEACHER EDUCATION

Continuing to build upon Kumashiro's (2001) acknowledgement of the "labor-intensive nature of this work" (p. 8), I argue that teacher educators (in the contexts of university education for preservice and inservice teachers, as well as professional development programs) should be transparent about the challenges of being critical educators, including the possibly lonely nature of this work. As I spent time in the teachers' classrooms, I learned that each of them had agreed to do this project with me in part because they were excited to have a colleague in school with whom they could talk and reflect about their book selections, units of study, and classroom discussions [Interviews and Field Notes]. For example, Ms. Smith expressed a sense of isolation from her professional school community during the grant-supported book club meetings. As I reported in Chapter Four, although many teachers expressed their interest in the work, Ms. Smith thought it was necessary to decenter her role as the leader and reframe the book club as a school initiative rather than her own personal initiative. In keeping with previous research discussed in the literature review, the teachers often felt generally unsupported by their school community. This is a key challenge of enacting critical pedagogies for inservice teachers in general, including these three. However, Ms. Barker, Ms. Smith, and Ms. Martinez were able to overcome the lack of support and enacted critical pedagogies with success in part because they accepted the reality that the practice of these pedagogies is highly labor-intensive—and, I would add, all-encompassing (Brown, 2013). Despite the challenges, they felt intrinsically motivated to continue this work, which they found fulfilling and important.

These three participants were veteran teachers, and as I stated in Chapter Four, they were aware of who they were and wanted to be as teachers. Ms. Martinez, Ms. Smith, and Ms. Barker were not looking for permission to be critical educators, and they

were even willing to "get in trouble" [Interviews and Field Notes] by addressing controversial topics in class. Through many informal conversations across the year, I learned that all three had developed manageable, professional, somewhat distant relationships with their administrators. In other words, their colleagues and administrators did not publicly laud these three teachers for their critical work with their students, or even for the grant initiatives for their schools (e.g., Ms. Smith's grant for the book club or Ms. Martinez's grant for the after school writing club or authors' visits), but at the same time, they were not openly critical of the teachers' approaches to critical education.

Ms. Smith, Ms. Martinez, and Ms. Barker all expressed sentiments of feeling alone in their enactment of critical pedagogies in the context of their respective schools. For example, Ms. Barker stated that she was the only teacher on her fourth-grade team who read aloud to her students and engaged them in literature discussions, specifically critical conversations. She explained that the other teachers did not criticize her pedagogical approach, but they did not see the need for it either. She hoped that maybe they would see the benefits of her pedagogical approach through her informal modeling and through their interactions with the students [Ms. Barker, Interview Four and Field Notes, May 2018]. Regardless of this lack of recognition or gratitude from their school community, the teachers persevered due to their own awareness of the need for an anti-oppressive/critical educational approach. This approach is particularly needed in the current political climates where the rhetoric of intolerance and hate of the "Other" (Kumashiro, 2001, 2009) is overt and accessible to the students in all media and social media outlets, as well as in person (through families and church communities, for example). It is nearly impossible to turn on the news or see a headline that does not foreground the Trump administration's distaste for the "Other" in America and the world.

Another implication for teachers in the field, or in teacher education programs, based on this research, is importance of teachers continually developing their own conscientization (Freire, 1970/2000), critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995), or humanizing critical sociocultural knowledge (Brown, 2013) in their work to be critical educators. Across the three cases in this project, Ms. Barker, Ms. Smith, and Ms. Martinez developed an all-encompassing curriculum for themselves in order to sustain and grow their enactment of critical pedagogies. Although they did not feel a sense of solidarity (Freire, 1970/2000) in the context of their schools with their colleagues or their administrators, they found community with their students, with their families (e.g., their daughters), with colleagues at local universities (e.g., faculty and preservice teachers), with families of their students, and with grass-roots organizations (e.g., locally or through social media). It was through interactions with members of these various other community contexts that the teachers continually grew their own awareness and developed their own critical sociocultural knowledge.

It is important to acknowledge here that most often the teachers pursued and these opportunities to sustain and grow their enactment of critical pedagogies on their own; in doing so, they took on additional responsibilities, typically with little to no professional recognition or financial compensation. In my original proposal, my current first research question (on how teachers work to sustain and grow their enactment of critical pedagogies) was originally my third research question. Now, however, I have come to realize that this question lies at the heart of my study and helps to illuminate the other two questions.

In order for teachers (including teacher educators) to enact critical pedagogies for the sake of change towards equity and anti-oppressive education, teachers must be brave. These critical educators demonstrated each day their willingness to face crisis and work

through it both in the context of the classroom, as well as in other spaces where they sought to grow their own critical sociocultural knowledge. Therefore, crisis, discomfort, and vulnerability are all experiences that critical educators have to be willing to endure and often invite—and we (critical scholars and educators) need to learn that in order to unlearn the dominant narratives, it is necessary to continuously question those narratives whenever we encounter them in our personal and professional lives. I believe that practitioners within the field of literacy education, as well as other areas within the broader field of curriculum and instruction, could draw on the approaches, strategies, and principles that these three teachers implemented in order to support aspiring critical educators in their processes of becoming. My findings suggest that to fully realize the principles of critical pedagogies, teachers should consider the need to make an all-encompassing [3]commitment to immersion into critical pedagogies in their personal and professional lives over the long term. I argue that without this commitment, we risk watering down critical pedagogies, reducing them to "add-on" approaches, or omitting them altogether.

Beyond these implications, teachers and teacher educators can to take comfort in the knowledge that these three teachers did not have to reinvent their teaching structures entirely in order to enact critical approaches. Ms. Martinez, Ms. Barker, and Ms. Smith remained workshop teachers. However, they reimagined the purpose of workshop and interactive read aloud as a structure that would support their enactment of critical pedagogies. They reimagined the content of their instruction, the resources for their instruction, and the need for students' voices and participation in a variety of contexts in

[3]It is important to note that Brown's (2013) use of the term "all-encompassing" is about recognizing that all aspects of the learning and teaching process is touched and implicated by sociocultural issues. "All-encompassing" is not only about teacher commitment to and engagement with critical teaching.

order to implement a yearlong inquiry into issues of inequity and resistance in local and global contexts, both historical and contemporary. The teachers were explicit in their expectations that the interactive read aloud was a time to talk politics with each other for the sake of disrupting the single story (Adichie, 2009) of how (and for whom) society should work. In the case of the three teachers, talking politics meant explicitly addressing societal issues and inequities and acknowledging that curriculum is not neutral. It is easy for all of us to feel overwhelmed by the thought of taking on new pedagogical approaches and new content; however, this research shows that teachers maintained their familiar structure for literacy instruction while simultaneously incorporating critical pedagogies and critical content into that established structure. Thus, teacher educators in both school and university contexts can reassure novice teachers that becoming a critical educator does not require inventing brand-new teaching structures. Instead, what we need to emphasize to preservice and inservice teachers is the need for vision, critical sociocultural knowledge, and commitment to the cause.

While the teachers maintained their workshop structure for literacy instruction, it was their chosen content, resources, and discourses that worked differently than in a typical reading workshop, where the teacher is traditionally focused on reading instruction to incorporate learning how to read, learning to comprehend what you read, and learning to respond to your reading in a "neutral" setting (Apple, 2004). Ms. Smith, Ms. Martinez and Ms. Barker supported their students' development of reading comprehension skills, but they did so by immersing their students very intentionally in units of study focused on sociocultural and political issues that addressed issues of power and inequity. Kumashiro explains, "My goal is not to name strategies that work (for all students, in all situations, against all oppression), but rather, to emphasize the partiality of any approach to challenging oppression, and the need to constantly rework these

approaches" (p. 4). The teachers planned their units in terms of the topic, theme, resources, and perspectives to foreground; however, because of the dialogic nature of this work, the teachers were also flexible, responsive, and reflective in their approaches. According to Banks (1993; 1994), critical educators should make significant changes to the structure of the curriculum in order to support their students in becoming politically active citizens. My study confirms prior scholars' findings that when teachers only try to address sociocultural issues on an occasional basis—say, by simply celebrating holidays (e.g., Dr. Martin Luther King Day) or adding on an isolated unit of instruction (e.g., a Civil Rights Unit during Black History Month)—then they are not realizing their full potential as critical educators.

This study's findings indicate that the teachers' work of planning and a preparing a yearlong curriculum in advance supported their ability to improvise critical instruction in the moment. As I reported in Chapter Six, the teachers and the students engaged in critical literature discussions on a daily basis; as a result, by the spring semester, it was apparent that the students did not perceive each read aloud as an isolated event. Rather, they understood the class literature discussions as part of a broader, ongoing, unfinished (Freire, 1970/2000) conversation. This emphasis on unfinished conversations and stories aligns with critical pedagogy's commitment to learning as a process of becoming (Freire, 1970/2000). Another essential component of critical pedagogy, closely related to this emphasis on becoming, is the need to improvise (Brown, 2013; Giroux, 2012). I argue that in order to improvise in a manner that does not perpetuate deficit perspectives of the Other (Kumashiro, 2001), that moves the talk and students toward positive change, teachers need to come to class prepared with their own well-developed critical sociocultural knowledge (Brown, 2013).

The literature indicates that teachers who "teach against the grain" often do so behind closed doors. Yet, Ms. Smith, Ms. Martinez, and Ms. Barker strove to do this work publicly in their school—in front of teachers, administrators, and families. They made their planned curricula clear to parents at the beginning of the school year, and they often invited the school community, including families, to celebrations at the close of units of study. This choice may partly reflect the teachers' years of experience, which fostered a sense of confidence that enabled them to be transparent about their social justice/critical curriculum during reading workshop. These three teachers expected pushback from their colleagues and families, but as Ms. Barker expressed, they had decided which types of teachers and teaching they were going to be and do.

One implication of this finding is that future and current teachers should be encouraged to try to seek out supportive spaces both in and out of school where they can talk freely about their intention to teach a critical, politically engaged curriculum. By seeking out such spaces and communities, or "alternate sites for learning" (Montaño et al., 2002), educators may find the sense of security that enabled these three teachers to articulate and advocate for their purpose while still meeting the educational demands of the institution. Clearly, there are challenges for teachers associated with being public about teaching and engaging young students in political activism—encouraging them to be up-standers—so I state this implication with that caution in mind. It may not be possible for a teacher to be as transparent as Ms. Martinez, Ms. Barker, or Ms. Smith for numerous reasons (for example, some teachers in more politically conservative districts may face greater risks in making their commitment to critical education public). Nonetheless, it is important for teachers to work towards being open to the greatest extent possible, in order to engage other members of the school community in the efforts of anti-oppressive education.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

This study has focused on elementary teachers development and enactment of critical pedagogies across an academic year during their daily interactive read aloud, despite the lack of direct support teachers received from their school administrators and districts. In Chapter Four and earlier in this chapter, I describe that these three teachers often felt lonely in their work as critical educators due to a lack of support and collaboration with their in-school colleagues, and they often had to find community with others in their pursuit of growing their critical sociocultural knowledge in their out-of-school contexts, including both in person and online spaces for community and activism. In response to the findings from this study, I have considered two immediate implications for policy in regards to the positioning of teachers in America and curriculum development and reform in America.

First, I return to Giroux's vision for educators as intellectuals, and more specifically as transformative intellectuals (1985) and public intellectuals (2012). Policy makers owe it to teachers to stop treating, using, positioning them as collateral that can be coerced unconsciously into enacting the dominant social groups' agenda of neoliberalism and capitalism, which requires the oppression of the "Other" (Kumashiro, 2001) in order for maintenance of the dominant social groups' power. I argue that teachers deserve to be positioned as intellectuals that can and should be the primary developers of curriculum, be supported to engage in authentic and purposeful dialogue and inquiry with their students, and to be members of professional learning communities that are actually collaborative and based in critical care (Pimental, 2011) for the educators, students, and families. We, as a society, must begin to humanize teachers and teaching, rather than the current state of affairs that remains disguised as educational reform towards best practices, which is strictly about the standardization of content.

Second, I return to Kumashiro's argument that we, educators, must strive to change the underlying story of America as the sole global power. In America right now, we are at the crossroads of two very opposing ideologies. On the one hand, it is likely evident to every person in this country that we have access to world events at our fingertips through our technology. However, at the same time, the current leader in this country and many others around the world are working to isolate the people of their country and ignore the importance of global participation and ideologies that promote a sense of global citizenship and responsibility in much larger capacities than just devotion to one's own country. Our policy makers must make the bold choice to ignore the imperialist messages of the current attempts to "Make America Great Again" by following Ms. Smith, Ms. Barker, and Ms. Martinez's example to open up the world to their students through prioritizing the importance of teaching geography and the past and present events that make up the narratives of a global society. I argue that policy makers, specifically educators (e.g., teachers), need to write curriculum at the national and state levels that actively disrupt the narrative of America as the sole power and the most important nation in the world. Instead, the curricula in America should embrace global perspectives by blurring the borders and encouraging students to read the world by reading the word in as many ways possible.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOLARSHIP AND THEORY

In this section, I consider two broad implications of my findings for scholarship in the fields of literacy instruction and critical pedagogy. First, I interpret these findings in relation to the critical conceptual and pedagogical frames that I reviewed in Chapter Two. Second, I propose a critically focused reconsideration of Bishop's (1991) metaphor of children's literature as mirror, window, and sliding glass door.

In Chapter Two, I provided an overview of multiple foundational frameworks of critical pedagogies, including *critical literacy* (Freire, 1970/2000; Janks, 2010; Morrell, 2004), *multicultural education* (Banks, 1993; 1994; 2014; Nieto, 1994; Sleeter & Grant, 2008), *culturally relevant pedagogy* (Ladson-Billings, 1995; 2014), *culturally sustaining pedagogy* (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014), and *anti-oppressive education* (Kumashiro, 2000; 2001; Kumashiro & Ngo, 2007). As I have sought to acknowledge throughout this study, each of these frameworks is distinct, and each works in complex ways in relation to the others; however, these frameworks also overlap in significant ways. For example, they all intend to honor and affirm students' cultural backgrounds, and they directly address the need for educators to resist and disrupt the inherent hegemony of inequity and oppression in K-12 schools. Scholars—mostly scholars of color who identify as critical educators—developed these frameworks, and we have learned through their scholarship of their commitment to lifting up students and communities that have been historically marginalized in our society and in our schools.

My analysis elaborates upon these frameworks by highlighting an aspect of these critical pedagogies that these scholars have seldom addressed: as critical educators, we need to be explicit about the significant investment of time and labor that the teacher undertakes in order to sustain and grow the process of becoming a critical educator. In order for teachers to develop, design, implement, and navigate transformative curricula with students, the teacher likely immerses herself in transformative curricula. Many of the frameworks I reviewed focus on the experiences and outcomes of the students, which may lead to a false impression that any teacher can teach a critical curriculum. I contend that this focus on students' outcomes, rather than teachers' own personal growth of critical sociocultural knowledge, may partly account for the "dulled" or superficial implementations of culturally relevant pedagogy that led Ladson-Billings (2014) to

express frustration with the field. Ladson-Billings perceived that the criticality of the framework was often dulled down or omitted altogether in classroom practice; my study suggests that this dulling-down may be especially likely to occur when teachers and teacher educators are not emphasizing the development of their own critical sociocultural knowledge. As my study has shown, this ongoing commitment to personal reflection and intellectual development may be crucial for teachers to support students' development of critical consciousness in turn. Moreover, it is possible that critical theories are often being taught by scholars who are themselves not committed to sustaining and growing their own critical sociocultural knowledge; this lack of commitment may initiate a cycle of practitioners watering down critical pedagogical frameworks, making it more comfortable and manageable to teach through "add-on" approaches. All of the scholars whose frameworks I reviewed write extensively in one way or another about the importance of the teacher's knowledge—yet, when conceptual frames are presented, we often see only the big ideas, without an accompanying understanding of how to face the challenges of implementing those ideas in practice. Thus, I argue that the tenets and/or criteria of critical frameworks should consider including language that emphasizes the hard work the teacher must do to truly engage in the process of becoming a critical educator. In this study I was able to identify several specific, concrete strategies that teachers can adapt and use in their own classrooms as a result of my time observing Ms. Smith, Ms. Martinez, and Ms. Barker's continuous efforts across this academic year.

My second contribution to the literature concerns the pedagogical resource at the center of my project's inquiry: multicultural children's literature. As I stated in Chapter Two, national literacy organizations (e.g., NCTE and ILA) advocate for the use of multicultural literature as a way to foreground multiple perspectives and disrupt dominant narratives in the context of school. A significant body of scholarship in the field of

literacy education for both preservice (e.g., Barnes, 2006; Escamilla & Nathenson-Mejía, 2003; Glenn, 2012; 2015; Groenke, 2008; 2009; Haddix & Price-Dennis, 2013; Hill, 2012; Howrey & Whelan-Kim, 2009; Lohfink, 2014; Nathenson-Mejía & Escamilla, 2003; Price-Dennis & Souto-Manning, 2011; and Szecsi et al., 2010) and inservice (e.g., Heineke, 2014; Lewis & Ketter, 2008; Mathis, 2001) teachers supports the use of multicultural children's literature as a powerful tool for teachers to incorporate into critical pedagogies. Nearly 30 years after Bishop (1991) introduced her metaphor of multicultural children's literature as a mirror, window, and sliding glass door, it continues to be one of the most popular ways to describe the power of multicultural or diverse children's literature in the current scholarship—a resource that invites students, particularly students of color, to see representations of themselves through an appreciative lens. For White students, the idea is that diverse literature serves as a window into the world of the "Other" by revealing the voices and cultures of people from diverse backgrounds. Interestingly, all three teachers explained this metaphor to me in their own words during our first interview as their rationale for incorporating multicultural literature on a daily basis during their interactive read alouds. But these three teachers were not satisfied just to show different perspectives to their students. While they did use multicultural children's literature to share many, many different stories with their students, some about people who looked like them and some about people who did not—but the teachers' purpose for sharing the story/stories were political in nature. The stories were a tool that the teachers used to advance their critical pedagogies. The literature served as springboards for discussions about inequity, oppression, and the need for social action. In response, I believe that it is necessary for us in the fields of critical pedagogy and literacy instruction to move beyond this metaphor towards more complex notions that bridge the teacher's work as a critical educator and

their use of this tool. Bishop's metaphor appears to emphasize the reader's encounter with the text, but I argue that it is time to foreground a third presence: the teacher, who guides students through this encounter.

I argue that it is time for us to extend Bishop's (1990) metaphor of mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors and inquire into this resource as a political tool that teachers can use in their year-round curricula to disrupt the status quo. In Chapter Two I referenced Xie's (2000) framing of multicultural children's literature as a pedagogical construct that could enable today's children to be post colonized. He argues that the text can confront hegemonic narratives by offering counterhegemonic negotiations. "By writing outside the syntax of imperialism, the violated and repressed others can force the world to confront their historical experience, and can prove their own intellectual, cultural, and moral excellence or equivalence" (p. 12). Xie advocates for a movement that embraces radical difference: "The marginalized others can turn tables on the dominant… [The Other] writes outside and threatens to subvert the rational, imperial order of discourse" (p. 9). Xie's vision for this tool seems to parallel the uptake of this tool in Ms. Smith, Ms. Barker, and Ms. Martinez's classrooms. It is not enough for students to simply be exposed to/learn about other perspectives; rather, a critical educator should go beyond mere exposure by overtly encouraging students to take action that disrupts and challenges a hegemonic status quo. Multicultural literature in itself may or may not inspire political action, but the kind of teaching that Xie encourages seems deliberately designed to call for political action. We are in a moment where we have more authors of color and characters of color than ever before, and we in the field of literacy education need to open up the possibilities of this resource as a tool to truly read the word in order to read the political world, where people are oppressed locally and globally. Literature's capacity as a "window" can be most fully realized when teachers present the literature in

a certain way, through guiding questions and activities that help highlight what the teacher wants students to see in that window. Through this study, I learned that young students are absolutely able and willing to engage with multicultural stories in order to contend with the political realities and ramifications of these narratives.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The focus of my study was on the teachers' enactment of critical pedagogical frameworks. My intention was to advance existing scholarship, both conceptual and empirical, by analyzing the practical uptake and enactment of critical theories over an extended period of time in the field of elementary literacy instruction. Due to time and other constraints, I chose to observe and collect data on one literacy structure, the interactive read aloThis was, I believe, a strong place to begin my inquiry because these teachers enacted interactive read aloud using multicultural children's literature with their students on a daily basis, and they utilized this space in order to engage in critical considerations of sociocultural events and knowledge. The read aloud was also the event and tool that the teachers identified as most foundational for their work as critical educators.

My analysis in some sense remains ongoing even now, and I look forward to the further insights to which future analysis will lead me, as well as other scholars in the field. The findings from this study also suggest directions for future research seeking to understand the enactment of critical pedagogies and the critical potential of multicultural children's literature. Research might extend the analysis beyond the read-aloud event to the entire literacy block (e.g., the entire reading and writing workshop). Future studies might focus on the teachers' and students' becoming simultaneously in order to further understand how the students' and teachers' are co-learners and co-teachers in this

journey. In this project, my focus was on the teachers' approaches, enactment, and facilitation of the interactive read aloud event, and although I have some student data, I chose not to follow focal students or conduct student interviews. A promising direction for future inquiry might be to explore the students' (engagement, development of thinking, emotional reaction, dialogic agency, etc.).

Ms. Smith and Ms. Martinez's participation in community and activism outside of school, I learned, was incredibly significant to the work they did as critical educators in school. I am grateful that I had several opportunities to learn about these experiences from them directly, join them in person at some of the events they attended, and follow their participation as *up standers* on social media. However, I know there is more to learn in this area of teachers as activists, and I believe this is a promising direction for future research, including pursuing such methodological approaches as narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2002). From Ms. Smith and Ms. Martinez, I learned that they often participated in their out of school activism with friends and parents from their school, and I think that is another interesting area of inquiry for researchers to pursue: teachers, families, and students working for change together in-and out-of-school.

CONCLUSION

In my opening vignette, I described a moment between two students, Jerome and Clarissa, which took place during a whole group literature discussion in my second grade classroom. Clarissa had just pointed out to the class that the books we had read and discussed in the past six weeks all featured Black characters. Jerome, in response, stated to the class that it was "racist" to name the race of the characters, especially in school. As the classroom teacher, I felt uncertain about what to do in that moment. How could I help Jerome, Clarissa, and the whole class not only to recognize that it is acceptable to

mention race in school, but also to learn how to discuss the implications of race in our classroom?

As I reflect on this exchange from more than a decade ago, I feel thrilled to realize how much this current project has inspired me to reconsider my role in this particular moment with Clarissa and Jerome—as well as countless other moments during my teaching life that left me feeling uncertain and disappointed in myself for not knowing what to do next. Before this project, I had positioned myself as a critical, specifically culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1995), elementary school teacher. In the course of this research, I have reconsidered and expanded my own perspectives on what it means to be a critical educator.

I have asked myself throughout, "What would I do now in this moment with Jerome and Clarissa?" Perhaps I would recognize the moment as a critical encounter—a moment when students' existing sociocultural knowledge gets unsettled, and thus an opportunity to disrupt a dominant narrative and guide the students toward humanizing critical sociocultural knowledge. Based on this recognition, perhaps I would improvise a response that extends the students' talk towards criticality. I could raise questions, such as "Let's talk more about that. Why do we think it might not be good to talk about race in school?" and "Have you ever seen a teacher, or another student, talking about race in school? What was that like?" or even something more direct, like "Sometimes, people think it's not respectful to talk about race in school. But actually, you can talk about race in a respectful way, and it's good to talk about it in school." Maybe one or more of these questions could be a turn and talk prompt.

I could use the literature as a way in to this conversation, perhaps pointing to a scene in a book when characters talk about race together in a way that is affirming and kind, not disparaging—thereby illustrating the difference between "talking about race"

and "racism," which is what Jerome seemed to be confused about. I could take inspiration from my fourth-grade teacher, Ms. Fields, who had such a positive impact on my life through the gesture of showing the class a beautiful fashion model who looked like me. Similarly, a teacher in this situation could point to images of Black leaders and heroes (in a book, on a wall poster) and say, "These leaders were proud to be Black. Being Black is part of who they are. They didn't think it was bad to talk about race…"

And finally, perhaps the point is not to say that I would do anything different, but instead to recognize that my confusion and hesitation in this moment was not a failure on my part as a critical educator; rather, that moment of confusion attests to the inherent difficulty of working as a critical educator. It's impossible for any teacher, no matter how experienced (and informed about pedagogical theory), to avoid such moments of uncertainty—but what sets critical educators apart is their willingness to reflect on those moments afterward, recognizing them as pathways towards growth. I am left thinking about the need for us, critical educators, to make the commitment to continually work to sustain and grow our critical sociocultural knowledge. I am left wondering about the teacher's need for community, rather than isolation, in this work. I am left wondering about time, and the need to make a commitment to this process of becoming and "reading the word in order to read the world," but also to be active out in the world over days, weeks, months, and years. Although Ms. Smith, Ms. Barker, and Ms. Martinez have sustained and grown their work as critical educators for many years now, I am grateful to know that they are out there, continuing their process of becoming, and bringing many more young people with them on their journey.

Appendices

Appendix A: Outline for Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-Structured Interview 1 (Fall 2017)

1. Tell me about yourself – history of teaching – background
2. Tell me about the literacy instruction in your classroom
    a. What is your teaching philosophy for literacy instruction?
    b. Tell me about your pedagogical perspectives
3. Tell me about your use of multicultural children's literature
    a. What is multicultural children's literature to you?
    b. When and how did you begin to use this tool?
4. Tell me about literature discussions in your classroom
5. Tell me about the role of reflection in your work as a literacy teacher

Semi-Structured Interview 2 (Fall 2017)

1. Please share your thoughts on our process and our work together, including your thinking on…
    a. Multicultural children's literature
    b. Literature discussions
    c. Critical pedagogical approaches/critical education
2. Please share your thoughts on your next steps for your classroom practice and your professional learning

Semi-Structured Interview 3 and 4 (Spring 2018)

1. Please share your thoughts on our process and our work together, including your thinking on…
    a. Multicultural children's literature
    b. Literature discussions
    c. Meetings with researcher and teacher focus group
    d. Critical pedagogical approaches/critical education
2. Please share your next steps for your classroom practice and your professional learning
3. Final thoughts and guidance on this project

Appendix B: Units of Study

	Units of Study in Ms. Smith's Classroom – 3rd grade	Units of Study in Ms. Barker's Classroom – 4th grade	Units of Study in Ms. Martinez's Classroom – 1st grade
August	Same and Different		Peace as Change
September	Overview of Types of Discrimination	Unit: Multiple Intelligences (text set of picture books) Empathy and Kindness (*Wonder* by RJ Palacio)	Good Citizen
October	Story of Columbus (dominant and counter-narrative) Global Goals (United Nations Project)	Empathy and Kindness (*Wonder* by RJ Palacio)	Community
November	Immigration	*Ghost* by Jason Reynolds	Immigration and Border Crossing
December	Homelessness, Poverty, and Hunger Inquiry		
January	Underground Railroad	Unit: Civil Rights	Kindness
February	Segregation Civil Rights (Yesterday and Today)	Unit: Signs and Symbols (Topics addressed: Japanese Internment, Migrant Farm Work, Holocaust, Loss of Mother, Global Poverty, Environmental Well-Being) (Pairing of fiction and nonfiction multimodal texts)	*(I was unable to continue to observe in Ms. Martinez's classroom due to the demands of her schedule.)*
March	March: Civil Rights (Yesterday and Today)	Signs and Symbols (continued)	
April	April: Women's Rights	Holocaust (*Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry)	
May	May: What is Normal?		

Appendix C: Units of Study with Text Sets, Ms. Smith, Ms. Barker, and Ms. Martinez

	Units of Study, Ms. Smith's Classroom, 3rd grade	Text Sets/Observed Read Alouds	Genre and Form
August	Same and Different	• *We Are All Wonders* by R.J Palacio, 2017 • *The Colors of Us* by Karen Katz, 1999 • *The Best Part of Me* by Wendy Ewald, 2002	Realistic Fiction Picture Books Photography
September	Overview of Types of Discrimination	• *Sneetches Movie*, Dr. Seuss, YouTube, original 1953 • *She Persisted* by Chelsea Clinton illustrated by Alexandra Boiger, 2017 • *My Friend has Down Syndrome* by Amanda Doering Tourville, illustrated by Kristin Sorra, 2008 • *Hidden: A Child's Story of the Holocaust* by Loic Dauvillier and Greg Salsedo, illustrated by Marc Lizano, 2014 • *Baseball Saved Us*, by Ken Mochizuki and Ill. by Dom Lee	Realistic Fiction Picture Books Biography Picture Book Historical Fiction Graphic Novel Movie
October	Story of Columbus (dominant and counter-narrative)	• *A Picture Book of Christopher Columbus* by David Adler, 1991 • *Encounter* by Jane Yolen and illustrated by David Shannon	Biography Picture Book Historical Fiction Picture Book

		(watched read aloud on YouTube), 1996	
	Global Goals (United Nations Project)	• *If the World Were a Village: A Book about the World's People* by David J. Smith, illustrated by Shelagh Armstrong, 2011 • *Global Goal* videos: *World's Largest Lessons*, 2015	Nonfiction Picture Book Media from nonprofit: https://www.globalgoals.org/
November	Immigration	• *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan, 2007 • *The Lotus Seed* by Sherry Garland, illustrated by Tatsuro Kiuchi, 1997 • *Two White Rabbits* by Jairo Buitrago and Rafael Yockteng, (translated by Elisa Amado), 2015	Wordless Picture Book Realistic Fiction Picture Books
December	Homelessness, Poverty, and Hunger Inquiry	• *The Lady in the Box* by Ann McGovern, illustrated by Marni Backer, 1997 • Video: Humans of New York • *Fly Away Home* by Eve Bunting, illustrated by Ronald Himler, 1993	Realistic Fiction Picture Books Social Media Video: Humans of New York
January	Underground Railroad	• *Heart and Soul: The Story of America and African Americans* by Kadir Nelson, 2013 • *Henry's Freedom Box* by Ellen Levine, illustrated by Kadir Nelson, 2007 • *Follow the Drinking*	Biography Picture Books Realistic Fiction Picture Books Historical Fiction Picture Books

		Gourd by Jeanette Winter, 1992 • *Love* by Matt de la Peña, illustrated by Loren Long, 2018	
February	Segregation Civil Rights (Yesterday and Today)	• *Dear Mr. Rosenwald* by Carole Boston Weatherford, illustrated by Gregory Christie, 2017 • *Grandmama's Pride* by Becky Birtha, illustrated by Colin Bootman, 2016 • *Rosa* by Nikki Giovanni, illustrated by Bryan Collier, 2007 • *If A Bus Could Talk: The Story of Rosa Parks* by Faith Ringgold, 2003	Biography Picture Books Realistic Fiction Picture Books Historical Fiction Picture Books
March	March: Civil Rights (Yesterday and Today)	• *Boycott Blues: How Rosa Parks Inspired a Nation* by Andrea Davis Pinkney, illustrated by Brian Pinkney, 2008 • *Little Rock Nine* Video - Time Magazine • *The Little Rock Nine and The Fight for Equal Education* by Gary Jeffrey and Nana Li, 2012 • *Sit-in: How Four Friend Stood Up by Sitting Down*, by Andrea Davis Pinkney, illustrated by Brian Pinkney, 2010 • *Freedom on the Menu* by Carole Boston Weatherford, illustrated by Jerome LaGarrigue, 2007 • *The Story of Ruby*	Biography Picture Books Realistic Fiction Picture Books Historical Fiction Picture Books Graphic Novels Videos and Media

		Bridges by Robert Coles, illustrated by George Ford, 1995 • *A Sweet Smell of Roses* by Angela Johnson, illustrated by Eric Velazquez, 2007 • *Climbing Lincoln's Steps: The African American Journey* by Suzanne Slade, illustrated by Colin Bootman, 2016
April	Women's Rights	
May	What is Normal?	Review of literature from the year

	Units of Study in Ms. Barker's Classroom – 4th grade	Text Sets	Genres and Form
August			
September	Unit: Multiple Intelligences (text set of picture books)	• *Stand Tall Molly Lou Melon* by Patty Lovell, illustrated by David Catrow, 2001 • *Librarian of Basra* by Jeanette Winter, 2005 • *Welsandia* by Paul Fleischman, illustrated by Kevin Hawkes, 1991 • *September Roses* by Jeanette Winter, 2004	Realistic Picture Books Post-modern Picture Books Biography Picture Books
	Empathy and Kindness (*Wonder* by RJ Palacio)	• *Wonder* by R.J. Palacio, 2012	Realistic Fiction, Middle Grade Novel
October	Empathy and Kindness (*Wonder* by RJ Palacio)	• *Wonder* by R.J. Palacio, 2012	
November	*Ghost* by Jason Reynolds	• *Ghost* by Jason Reynolds, 2016	Realistic Fiction, Middle Grade Novel, Series
December	Did not observe in December due Ms. Barker's schedule		
January	Unit: Civil Rights	• *The Story of Ruby Bridges* by Robert Cole, illustrated by George Ford, 1995 • *Video on Dr. Martin Luther King*, Source unknown • *Freedom's Ring: King's "I Have a Dream" Speech*, Stanford University (http://freedomsring.stanford.edu)	Biography Picture Books Realistic Fiction Picture Books Historical Fiction Picture Books Videos and Media
February	Unit: Signs and Symbols (Topics addressed: Japanese Internment, Migrant Farm Work,	• *Running Shoes* by Frederick Lipp, illustrated by Jason Gaillard, 2008 • *Students Donate Shoes, Books,*	Biography Picture Books Realistic Fiction Picture Books

	Holocaust, Loss of Mother, Global Poverty, Environmental Well-Being) (Pairing of fiction and nonfiction multimodal texts)	*and Supplies to help Kids in Another Country* by Natalia Barker • *So Far From the Sea* by Eve Bunting, illustrated by Chris K. Soentpiet • *Japanese-American Relocation in the US During World War II* (Newsela, 2.1.2017) • *Fred Korematsu: Why his story still matters today* (Newsela, 5.3.2017) • *The Yellow Star: The Legend of King Christian X of Denmark* by Carmen Agra Deedy, illustrated by Henri Sorensen, 2000 • *Amelia's Road* by Linda Jacobs Altman and Enrique O. Sanchez, 1993	Historical Fiction Picture Books Videos and Media
March	Signs and Symbols (continued)		
April	Holocaust Unit	• *Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry, 1989	Historical Fiction, Middle Grade Novel
May		• *Percy Jackson, Book 1,* Rick Riordan	Fantasy

	Units of Study in Ms. Martinez's Classroom – 1st grade	Text Sets	Genre and Form
August	August: Peace as Change	• *Grandfather Gandhi* by Arun Manilal Gandhi, Bethany Hegedus, illustrated by Evan Turk, 2014	Biography Picture Book
September	September: Good Citizen	• *Tomás and the Library Lady*, by Pat Mora, illustrated by Raul Colon, 1997	Biography Picture Book
October	October: Community	• *Mama Miti: Wangari Maathai and the Trees of Kenya* by Donna Jo Napoli, illustrated by Kadir Nelson, 2010 • Diamonds Poem by Ms. Yolanda Martinez • *Maybe Something Beautiful* by F. Isabel Campos and Theresa Howell, illustrated by Rafael López, 2016	Biography Picture Book Realistic Fiction Picture Book Poetry
November	November: Immigration and Border Crossing	• *Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote* by Duncan Tonatiuh, 2013 • *Two White Rabbits* by Jairo Buitrago, illustrated by Rafael Yockteng, 2015 • *Friends from the Other Side/Amigos del otro lado* by Gloria E. Anzaldúa, illustrated by Consuelo Méndez,	Realistic Fiction Picture Book

1993

December	
January	January: Kindness
February	
March	I was unable to continue to observe in Ms. Martinez's classroom due to the demands of her schedule.
April	
May	

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